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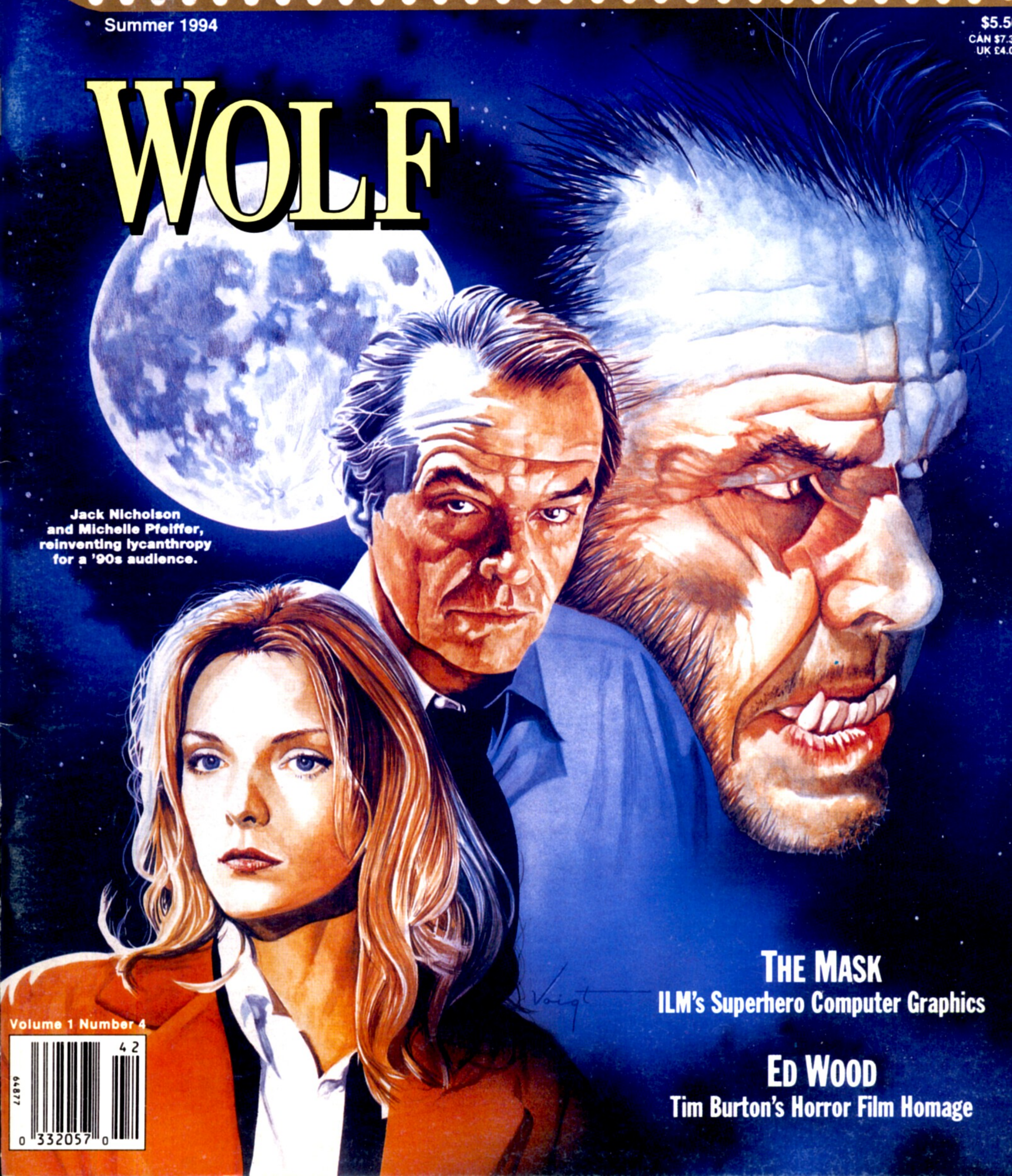
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Volume 1 Number 4



# IMAGI-MOVIES

Fall 1994

Volume 2 Number 1

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## NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET VII

**DIRECTOR  
WES CRAVEN  
ON HIS NEW  
NIGHTMARE**

**INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE**  
Do Tom Cruise Fans Want to See Him Bite Brad Pitt?

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VOLUME 1 NUMBER 4

"The Magazine of Movie Imagination"

SUMMER, 1994

## CINEMAGINATION

"You're cruel," says the angel Raphaela in Wim Wender's *FAR AWAY, SO CLOSE!* to which Emit Fleis responds, "On the contrary, I have no pity." This little exchange seems to sum up the misunderstanding some readers have about *IM*'s attitude. We're not cruel; we simply have no pity when giving an objective assessment of the merits (or lack thereof) in any film, no matter whose name is attached.

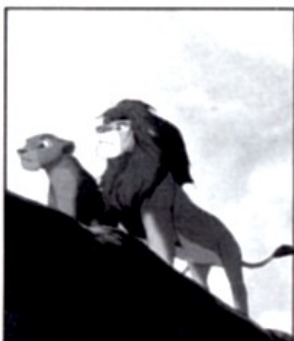
I raise this point because of a recent letter asking us to take Stephen King off our "hate list" and cover his films "fairly." Actually, there is no such list, and I don't resent the implication that we have been unfair so much as I simply and totally reject it. In fact, this entire brouhaha derives from the fact that we have been scrupulously fair; that is, we have refused to cut extra slack for someone just because his name is well-known.

Stephen King has written some excellent novels, but even his most ardent fans must admit that his big-screen batting average is too low to warrant much optimism each new time he steps up to the plate. If and when he gets a hit, we will be the first to cheer. (Hey, it's not like I was a big Spielberg fan before *JURASSIC PARK*, so anything's possible.) But if you want to read an interview with the Brand Name of Horror in the pages of any *CFQ* publication, your time would be better spent writing to King and asking him to take us off his hate list. A sample letter might read, "Dear Mr. King: We can understand why you might be ticked off at the guy who wrote that *SLEEPWALKERS* review, but that's no reason to deny access to writers like Michael Beeler and Gary Wood, who obviously admire your work." In the meantime, with 16 pages devoted to *THE STAND* in the April *CFQ*, no one can seriously accuse us of ignoring him. But *IM* is devoted to covering what isn't covered in *CFQ*. There are other filmmakers, less well known perhaps, who deserve space in our magazine.

Steve Biodrowski



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# ED WOOD

## Tim Burton attempts to direct a good film about a bad filmmaker.

By Mark Carducci

There is a cinema set in what one might call the Universe of the Unintentionally Surreal. It is defined by stilted acting, hollow post-production-added sound, a lack of exterior shots (except perhaps those from a stock shot library), limited camera movement, and dark cinematography. 1950's exploitation director Edward D. Wood Jr., perhaps more than any other filmmaker, lived there.

Wood's films managed to be both ludicrous and haunting at the same time, but even more ludicrous and haunting than his movies was the life of the man himself—a life so harrowing and outlandish that it's become the subject of director Tim Burton's new film, which will receive a star-studded treatment far more lavish than anything directed by its title character.

ED WOOD's cast is a canny mixture of inspiration and commercial savvy. Wood himself will be played by Johnny Depp, with whom Burton has worked before in EDWARD SCISSORHANDS. In an attempt to emulate his hero, director Orson Welles and Welles' Mercury Theatre, Ed Wood made his films with essentially the same actors and assorted hangers-on, seeing himself as a sort of impresario, which within the DAY OF THE LOCUST-like strata of Hollywood he occupied, he was. Besides lesser



Tim Burton on the set of ED WOOD. The eccentric director got Disney to back the off-beat, risky bio-pic before signing a long-term contract with rival Warner Brothers.

known actor-buddies such as Conrad Brooks and Paul Marco (who played Kelton the Cop in three of Wood's films), he made repeated use of an ex-wrestler, Tor Johnson (the Super Swedish Angel), a Showman/ Psychic to the Stars called Criswell, and, in PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE, the first of TV's "Horror Hosts," the svelte and sexy Vampira. By far Wood's most famous cast member was the by-then downtrodden horror great Bela Lugosi.

Lugosi was almost forgotten in Lotusland's casting offices by the time he met the young Wood via Alex Gordon (brother of producer Richard and producer himself of Wood's own BRIDE OF THE MONSTER). Wood had been an ardent fan of Lugosi's since his youthful days as an usher in a Poughkeepsie, New York bijou,

where he thrilled to Lugosi in his greatest gothic horror roles.

For ED WOOD, Bela Lugosi is being played by Martin Landau, aided and abetted by special makeup designed by Rick Baker. In fact, it was Landau's makeup tests as Lugosi that finally convinced Burton to go black and white for the film as a whole. Says screenwriter Scott Alexander, "We did a makeup test with Rick Baker on Martin Landau. And it was shot in color. And we watched it. And it just didn't feel right. Not through any fault of Rick's makeup but because, who's ever seen Bela Lugosi in color? That was the thing that tipped the scales. Once Tim got hooked on the black and white idea he didn't want to hear about color ever again. Even when the casting director was doing auditions on videotape,

they kept the color on the monitor turned off."

According to co-writer Larry Karaszewski, it's around Ed Wood's poignant and mutually beneficial relationship with Lugosi that ED WOOD's screenplay has been organized. "In our very first meeting with Tim Burton, I literally said, 'You can call this movie ED AND BELA, A LOVE STORY.' The movie really is a platonic love story, in a way."

Scott Alexander agrees: "I think it's a father and son relationship. But it's also about how they were able to help each other. By that time in his career, Bela couldn't get a job to save his life. And Ed, just starting out, couldn't get a movie to direct to save his life. But Ed was able to use Bela to get a movie and Bela was able to use Ed to be in a movie. Some meanies will say that Ed was exploiting Bela, putting him in this dreck. But truthfully, Bela didn't have anything else."

The Wood-Lugosi relationship has a parallel in the life of director Tim Burton. Burton befriended the recently deceased Vincent Price, even managing to work with him on two occasions, in the short film VINCENT and, much later, in EDWARD SCISSORHANDS. This has been advanced as another reason for Burton's attraction to the story of Wood. Alexander and Karaszewski were aware of the parallel going in.

"We figured that if we could



Above: Martin Landau, in Rick Baker's makeup, plays the aging and bitter Bela Lugosi ("Boris Karloff couldn't smell my shit!"), and Johnny Depp is notoriously untalented schlock director Ed Wood. Below: the real Lugosi, with his inevitable cigar, and Wood (sitting at right) sign contracts with producer Alex Gordon.

really make Tim identify and empathize with the characters, that would also help us focus on what the movie would really be about. Our general feeling about biopics is that there isn't an overriding need to start when the person is two years old and end when they die. We looked at Ed Wood's life and asked ourselves why Ed Wood was remembered. And it wasn't because he made porno loops for Swedish Erotica in the '70s, which he did. It was because he made *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*; he made *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER*; and he made *GLEN OR GLENDA*. And he knew Bela Lugosi. All the great stories about him are concentrated in that period. It almost seemed like a three-act structure just jumped out at us. We ended up structuring the script's three acts around meeting Bela, working with Bela, and Bela dying. That became our story."

Though Ed Wood's life after *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* was a slow downward slide into alcoholism and

poverty, the writers have chosen to close *ED WOOD* with the director on a high from just having made *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*. The screenplay's final images show Ed exhilarated, taking a bow from the stage at the cast and crew premiere of the film, as yet blissfully unaware of how difficult it will be to get his unintentionally hilarious film distributed. Bringing Ed's story to a conclusion in this way was important to Alexander and Karaszewski, and to Burton. Scott Alexander sums up. "Tim does identify with Ed. He is totally on Ed Wood's side. And so were we. I think that is our key achievement in writing the script, because Ed had a horrible life. His life was a disaster. And we found all the good moments, and all the crazy funny moments. Tim said it was like opera. It's very funny, and very tragic at the same time, full of these grand dramatic gestures. So we end with the premiere of *PLAN 9*, on an up note, with Ed thinking he's made a masterpiece." □



# SINISTER SENTINEL

● While the current buzz in most genre circles is due to rumors of a new STAR WARS trilogy (which Lucas supposedly would like to complete before the next century), *IM*, with our preference for the horrific, is far more excited about the reteaming of the two Williams, Blatty and Friedkin, for the first time since *THE EXORCIST. ELSEWHERE*, described as a "unique ghost story," will be directed by Friedkin once Paramount approves Blatty's finished script.

● In Hollywood, a boxoffice failure usually finds itself immediately abandoned in spite of any artistic merits, as if the effort and enthusiasm that went into its making were obliterated by less than grandiose grosses. So it is a gratifying surprise to find Julian Sands making himself available for the press in order to support the video release of *BOXING HELENA*. "My views and feelings for the project are uncompromised by its distribution or the attention it got," explains the actor, who takes exception to negative comments leveled at writer-director Jennifer Lynch. "I know that she particularly has taken a lot of personal criticism—in my view, unjustifiably, but perhaps, in reflection, not so surprisingly, because it *is* fairly radical," he says of her approach. "At least she was trying for something original, trying to present, in however peculiar a way, some rather radical but very astute observations about human romantic relationships. I think that's laudable



Eddie Murphy, here buried in Rick Baker's makeup for *COMING TO AMERICA*, will appear in *NUTTY PROFESSOR II* and *A VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN*.

and worthy of encouragement."

Sands has no comment on the Kim Basinger lawsuit, which took place while he was working in Europe, but he does note some negative fallout: "I think one of the spin-offs was that a certain idea was presented through various aspects of the media that the film was a kind of slasher movie or very much more gruesome and grueling, whereas in fact I think it's very gentle and comedic—the most romantic thing I've been involved with since *A ROOM WITH A VIEW*. I think those aspects, which are the principal motifs of the film, weren't necessarily reflected in the attention it got through the court case. It

sounded like *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*."

● *THE FANTASTIC FOUR* is officially shelved. Constantine Films exercised an option to buy out the film from Concorde, supposedly in order to do a \$40-million version directed by Chris Columbus at 20th Century Fox. Rumors to this effect had been circulating during production: it was well known that producer Bernd Eichinger had gone into partnership with Roger Corman in order to start production before the end of the year; otherwise, rights to the property would have reverted to Marvel Comics, who could have cut their own deal with Fox. What remains unclear is whether the Columbus version is a definite go (no contracts have been signed) or a mere pipe dream that Constantine is hoping will materialize now that their rights are again secure.

● Looks like the next subject being beaten to death in Tinseltown is *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*, although no current version in prep is directly based on Robert Louis Stevenson's famous tale. TriStar's *MARY REILLY* derives from Valerie Martin's novel, which retells the story from the point of view of Jekyll's maid. Julia Roberts is set to star for director Stephen Frears, working from a script by Christopher Hampton. Meanwhile, Savoy Pictures has the contemporary *DR. JEKYLL AND MS. HYDE*, with Tim Daly and Sean Young taking over for Ralph Bates and Martine Beswicke (the latter profiled elsewhere in this issue). Unfortunately, the filmmakers seem unaware that

their sex change variation on the theme was previously handled in *DR. JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE*. You'd think they'd at least give Beswicke a cameo. Finally, Jerry Lewis has declared his intention to direct and star in a sequel to *THE NUTTY PROFESSOR*. "I've been working on *NUTTY PROFESSOR II* for about four years, and I just made a deal with Disney for it, so we're going to get it done," he told me months before making the official announcement. "It's a marvelous script. I want to bring *THE NUTTY PROFESSOR* back because we get hundreds of letters a month saying, 'Please do *THE NUTTY PROFESSOR* for our kids who didn't see the first one.'"

● Lewis' costar, Eddie Murphy, is also planning *A VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN* with Wes Craven, one of three projects that the director has "floating around," including a big screen adaptation of *Dr. Strange* and a remake of Robert Wise's classic *THE HAUNTING*. (Of course, all of this happens *after* Craven finishes his new *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*.) Craven told *CFQ*'s Dale Kutzera, "The most far forward is [*VAMPIRE*], depending on whether Eddie Murphy does *NUTTY PROFESSOR* next. It was written by his brother, Charlie, and would star himself and Charlie at this point. We just signed a couple writers to do a rewrite, and they [the brothers Murphy] want to do it as soon as the script is ready. It's a black comedy in which Eddie would play a vampire. He is very excited about playing a sort of scary, frightening, powerful persona. Turns out he was a big fan of *THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW*, and his calling me in was based on that."

● *IM*'s anonymous undercover reporter recently infiltrated the *VAMPIRE CONSPIRACY* photo shoot by disguising herself as a wardrobe girl, and filed this report: "The producers were treating this actress I'd never heard of like she was a star. This woman would have had to exercise eight hours a day to have breasts that erect, but she didn't have a muscle anywhere on her body. When I put her in a bustier and tried to draw the strings tight to get some cleavage, nothing happened. 'They don't move much,' she explained to me. I said, 'Honey, I know. Whatever they injected into you, it's solidified.'"

● At a recent special effects

William Peter Blatty (left) and William Friedkin, of *EXORCIST* fame, will reteam on the supernaturally themed *ELSEWHERE* for Paramount.



symposium hosted in Hollywood by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Oscar-winner Richard Edlund addressed the future of the craft in this time of rapid technological change: "Visual effects will become much more commonplace. They'll be used more liberally by films which normally wouldn't use them. It will be just like in the old days when matte paintings were used a lot more than they are now. Visual effects are a way of helping the director change elements in a shot to create mood. The reason is that everything will be much less expensive. I see all kinds of strange software packages being piped over by fiber optic and satellite and, essentially, if you want to see Mona Lisa turn and smile at you, you'll have some young Leonardo doing that."

Added Disney's Harrison Ellen-shaw, "The concept of a visual effects facility is changing very rapidly. We probably only have a limited number of years in that kind of environment. One day, editors will be compositing shots on their non-linear editing systems, and films will no longer be in print form projected onto a screen. We are coming to the end of an era, and it's very exciting, because it will allow all of us to be more creative."

● This year's American Film Market in Santa Monica ran true to form, with *IM* discovering more schlock than shock. Still, there were a few interesting oddities, such as the announcement of Stuart Gordon as director of Clive Barker's *HELLRAISER IV*—certainly a promising combination of sensibilities. Also, Troma seems to be going upscale—or at least their 50th Street division is—by producing an adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," starring veteran character actor John Ryan (*RUNAWAY TRAIN*) as the Devil, along with Tom Shell and *IM* cover girl Mindy Clarke.

The most interesting press conference concerned *THE HIGH CRUSADE*, based on Poul Anderson's novel about knights hijacking a flying saucer. Taking time off from post-production on Carolco's *STARGATE*, Rolland Emmerich attended, along with *CRUSADE* co-directors Klaus Knoesel and Holger Neuhauser. Said executive producer Emmerich of entrusting the sci-fi comedy to newcomers, "Why shouldn't I trust these guys? At that

age, you have a fresh approach. That's more important than years of experience." The directors hope their English-language film will help them follow their mentor's footsteps into the U.S. market, although they admitted that the notion of a German comedy seems a little unusual. "Germany is the second worst country for comedy, after Finland," they joked. After the conference, star John Rhys-Davies confided to *IM*, "It's a very worthwhile little film—I like science-fiction, and I like comedy." Regarding the next *INDIANA JONES*, he said, "A script has been written, but I don't know if my character's in it. And I don't think Steven [Spielberg] is still interested in doing comic Nazis."

● With *MRS. DOUBTFIRE*, Greg Cannom becomes only the third two-time Academy Award winner in the makeup category. Ironically, he shares an Oscar with the second double winner, Michelle Burke, for *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*. In fact, at last year's ceremony, after he spoke, the microphones were cut off before either Burke or co-winner Matthew Mungle could say anything, thanks to the Academy's ridiculous time limitation. Burke opines that the producers of the show "should make the dance and song numbers a little shorter," in order to afford more time for acceptance speeches. "I think people really want to



**THE HIGH CRUSADE** features a comic confrontation between crusading knights and otherworldly aliens.

hear what the winners have to say, and all they did was this hurried, frantic rush. Greg and I did speak beforehand about "if we win," but we didn't really make a serious game plan, because we felt it would jinx things. Then it's hard while you're up there to say, 'Well, Greg, give me a chance to thank my crew.' I would have thanked the usual people: [director] Francis [Coppola], [costume designer] Eiko Esioka, the Academy, the producers at Sony, my husband, Jean Jacques Annaud [whose *QUEST*

*FOR FIRE* won Burke her first Oscar], and Roger Spottiswoode, along with my hair and makeup crews. The hair stylists were Stuart Artingstall, Jose Norman, Mary Bloom and Skip McNally; the makeup artists were Carol Schwartz, John Blake, Rick Stratton, Jane English, and Gil Moscow."

After the show, Burke received a "funny telegram from Rick Baker, saying, 'Congratulations! Maybe we should start a club for two-time award-winning makeup artists. Of course, we're the only two!' I didn't realize that until he sent the telegram; it was pretty astute of him to notice. So I thanked him and said, 'Maybe next year we'll have another winner.'" Prophetic words.

● While we're on the topic of *DRACULA*, we thought it might be interesting to know what another director had to say about translating Stoker's classic to the screen. Says John Badham, whose 1979 adaptation is starting to look better in light of Francis Ford Coppola's *Harlequin Romance* version, "The original Bela Lugosi movie was based on a play that Hamilton Deane and John Balderston had done, and they just compressed the hell out of [the story]. We said, 'We can't do what they did on Broadway; we'll do something different. Let's go back, look at the novel, and start from the original source material. Maybe we'll learn something.' And we did; it was very helpful. Which they were making a big fuss about with Francis' version. What, he's the first person to read this book?" □

Wes Craven will have his hands full after finishing his latest *NIGHTMARE* (below), with *DR. STRANGE* and *THE HAUNTING* in development.



# THE MASK

## Tex Avery-style antics by way of ILM effects.

By Chuck Crisafulli

Famous Looney Tunes directors Tex Avery and Bob Clampett may not be credited as collaborators on *THE MASK*, but those late greats have been guiding forces on the modestly budgeted New Line picture, which tells the story of Stanley Ipkiss, a hapless chump who is transformed into an unusual superhero when he dons a very peculiar ancient mask. The film, based on the popular Dark Horse comic series, is directed by Chuck Russell (*THE BLOB*, *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET IV*), and stars Jim Carrey, of TV's *IN LIVING COLOR*, as Ipkiss. Also featured in the cast are Amy Yasbeck (*PROBLEM CHILD*, *ROBIN HOOD: MEN IN TIGHTS*), Peter Riegert (*ANIMAL HOUSE*), and comedian Richard Jeni, making his screen debut.

"We're able to do phenomenal things with the computer now, but it's always been used for very serious, realistic effects—like the *JURASSIC* dinosaurs," says ILM visual effects producer Clint Goldman. "On *THE MASK* we're using the computer to create photo-real Looney Tunes in the tradition of Avery and Clampett and Chuck Jones. Instead of making a believable, natural dinosaur, we're using the computer to make Jim Carrey's eyes rocket out of his head while his tongue rolls across a table. For those of us who grew up on cartoons, it's fantastic."

Director Russell is also quick to point to Tex Avery's cartoons as a model for *THE MASK*'s zany humor. "Tex Avery has been an inspiration from the beginning. In fact, I'm very happy that we got the

rights to some Tex stuff so that we could show Stanley watching a cartoon before all the madness begins to happen to him. It was our way of tipping our hat to the work that influenced us, from Tex right through to *REN & STIMPY*.

Cartoons and comic books are the kind of culture I sucked up as a kid, and it's nice to be able to add to those traditions and maybe even move them forward."

*The Mask* comic books, authored by Dark Horse's Mike Richardson, have not been so cartoonish in tone. The character of the Mask was patterned as a cross between Steve Ditko's Creeper and Batman's cackling foe, the Joker. The storylines have often had a dark and violent edge, and Russell admits that he took some liberties with his source material.

"I wanted to bring in a new group of characters and my own storyline, and I didn't want to get involved on the project until I could do that. There are some terrific things from the comic, but I think we ended up with a bigger, less horrific story.

Anticipating big summer boxoffice, New Line advanced the release to July 29.



Inset: Carrey dons the mask that turns Ipkiss into a superhero.

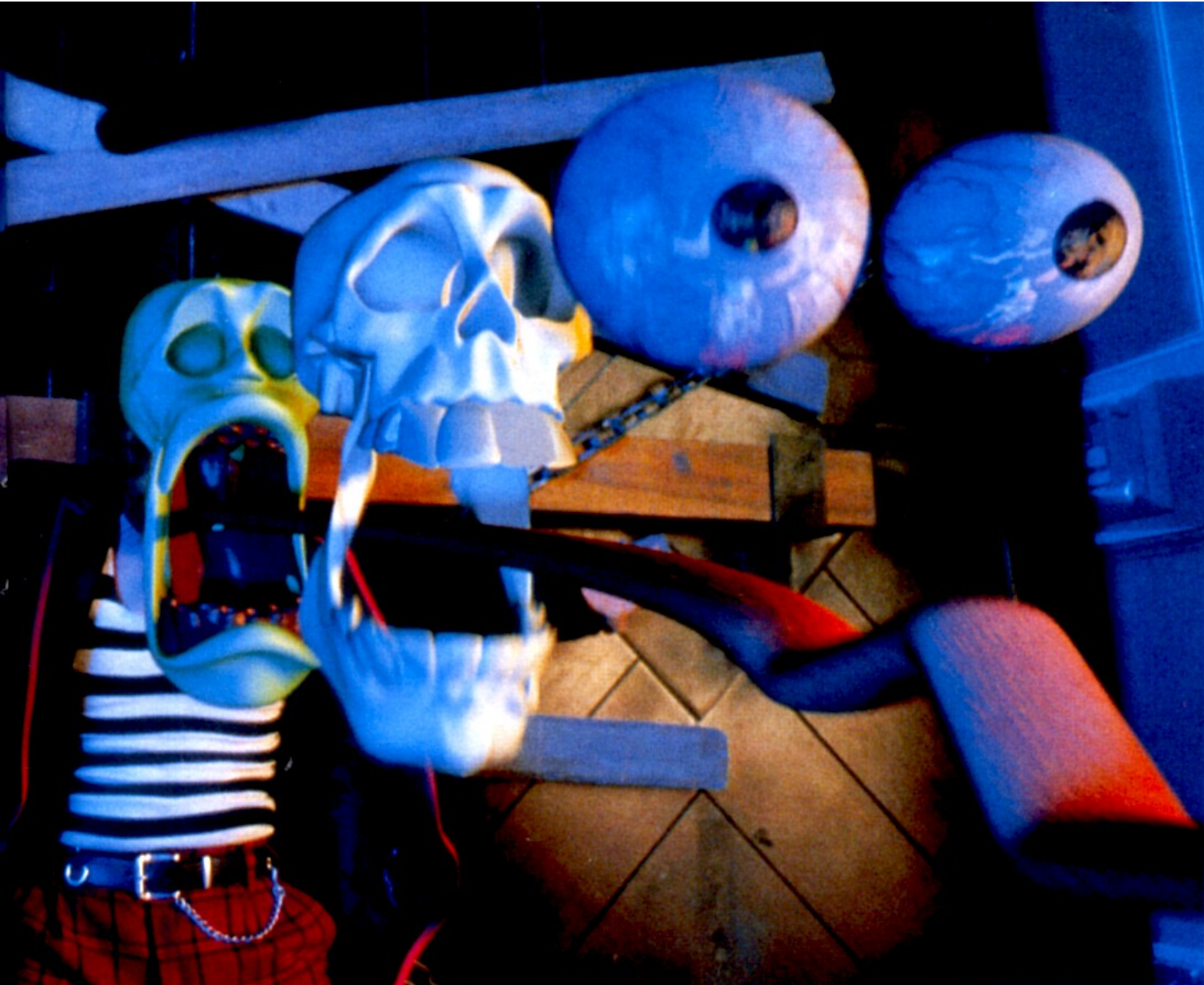
The comics have an almost *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* quality to them. I wanted to keep that edge in the movie, and not make a Disney film, but there's also some fun, magic, and romance in the story now. It's hyperactive and highly comic."

Goldman says that, following Russell's lead, he and the ILM crew ended up using Avery cartoons as more of a reference point than they used the comic books. But he also adds that there is some built-in horror in the kind of comic effects they've developed.

"When you watch a real person's head change shape to look like the Wolf from Avery's 'Red Hot Riding Hood,' you get into an element of horror. The film doesn't want to be completely horrific, but a little tinge of horror keeps it cool. There's a point where Stanley's dog gets the mask on, and we ended up adding a computer-generated head to a Jack Russell terrier. That's a disturbing image. The combination of funny and a little bit scary keeps the film interesting and compelling."

Although the hyperkinetic "live-cartoon" action would seem absolutely to demand the skills of ILM, they in fact did not join up with the project until well into pre-production. Not knowing who was going to supply his effects did not restrict Russell's artistic vision, however, "My story-boarding was done prior to ILM's in-





The cartoonish Tex Avery-inspired shape-shifting abilities bestowed on Ipkiss by the titular mask necessitated state-of-the-art computer graphics effects from ILM, supervised by Clint Goldman.

volvement, but when I write fantasy, I tend to write very freely, and the storyboards were ambitious. I knew I would be into computer graphics with somebody, but I assumed that I wouldn't be able to afford ILM. I'm very excited that it worked out."

Though Goldman admits with a chuckle that ILM sometimes had trouble keeping pace with Russell's visions, they were delighted to bring them to life. But viewers of the film shouldn't assume that every odd moment on screen is by way of computers. Russell wrote the script with Carrey's comedic skills in mind, and was told by ILM after they had worked with Carrey footage that the comedian's physical prowess may have saved Russell a million dollars on the effects budget. "Carrey is the most exciting physical comedian happening right now," says Russell. "He's brilliant. There's almost an element of some of the old silent movie comedians in his work. Our goal in THE MASK is that audiences won't be entirely certain where Jim Carrey leaves off and where ILM begins."

Having had a chance to put his personal stamp on the ravenous protoplasm of the Blob and on the exploits of Freddy Krueger, Russell hopes he's done the same with the film version of THE MASK. "It's always very satisfying for me to take existing characters and make them my own. This project is the most original thing I've done, and it's something I've been dying to try—adventure comedy with an edge. I have some comedic background [Russell produced the Rodney Dangerfield vehicle BACK TO SCHOOL], and I've re-

ally wanted a chance to apply what I know about action and special effects to a comedy format. I got to go bananas on this."

The director hasn't lost his taste for horror material, but he does explain that there are some emotional perks to working on a comedy. "Having worked on comedy, horror, and things in between like THE BLOB, I've found that comedy is very uplifting. When something's funny in the film, it was funny on the set, and we were laughing. Films are always hard to make, but comedy lifts your spirits while you work on it. I like to think that on the ELM STREET I did there was a sense of hope

**“It’s pretentious to talk of setting a new effects standard. We followed a wild path, but I just feel lucky to open this particular toybox.”**

**—Director Chuck Russell—**

and a sense of fun, but it was still full of shocking things and people screaming. As a filmmaker, those screams and shocks are something you have to live with in an editing room for six months. That can take its toll on you."

Goldman also sounds somewhat uplifted by the work that ILM has contributed. "Effects haven't really been all that successful in comedy films. They've usually looked a little stiff and a little stupid. But now we've got stuff that looks incredibly real and is very funny. I think the difference is that on this project ILM began to work more as a behavioral animation company than as a visual effect composite company. The basic process of filmmaking is changing for the first time in decades, and I witnessed that every day on this project."

Director Russell simply feels privileged to have had some brand new storytelling tools to use in bringing THE MASK to movie theaters. "It's too pretentious of me to talk about setting a new standard of effects work. I just think in terms of the story. I'm always tough on myself, asking 'Am I taking the safe route?' I think we followed a wild path with THE MASK, but I don't think about setting new standards. I just feel lucky that I was the first kid to open this particular toybox." □

Left to right: director Chuck Russell (THE BLOB), Cameron Diaz, and Jim Carrey (IN LIVING COLOR).





# THE CROW

**Despite tragedy, the grim graphic novel reaches the screen.**

*By William Wilson Goodson Jr.*

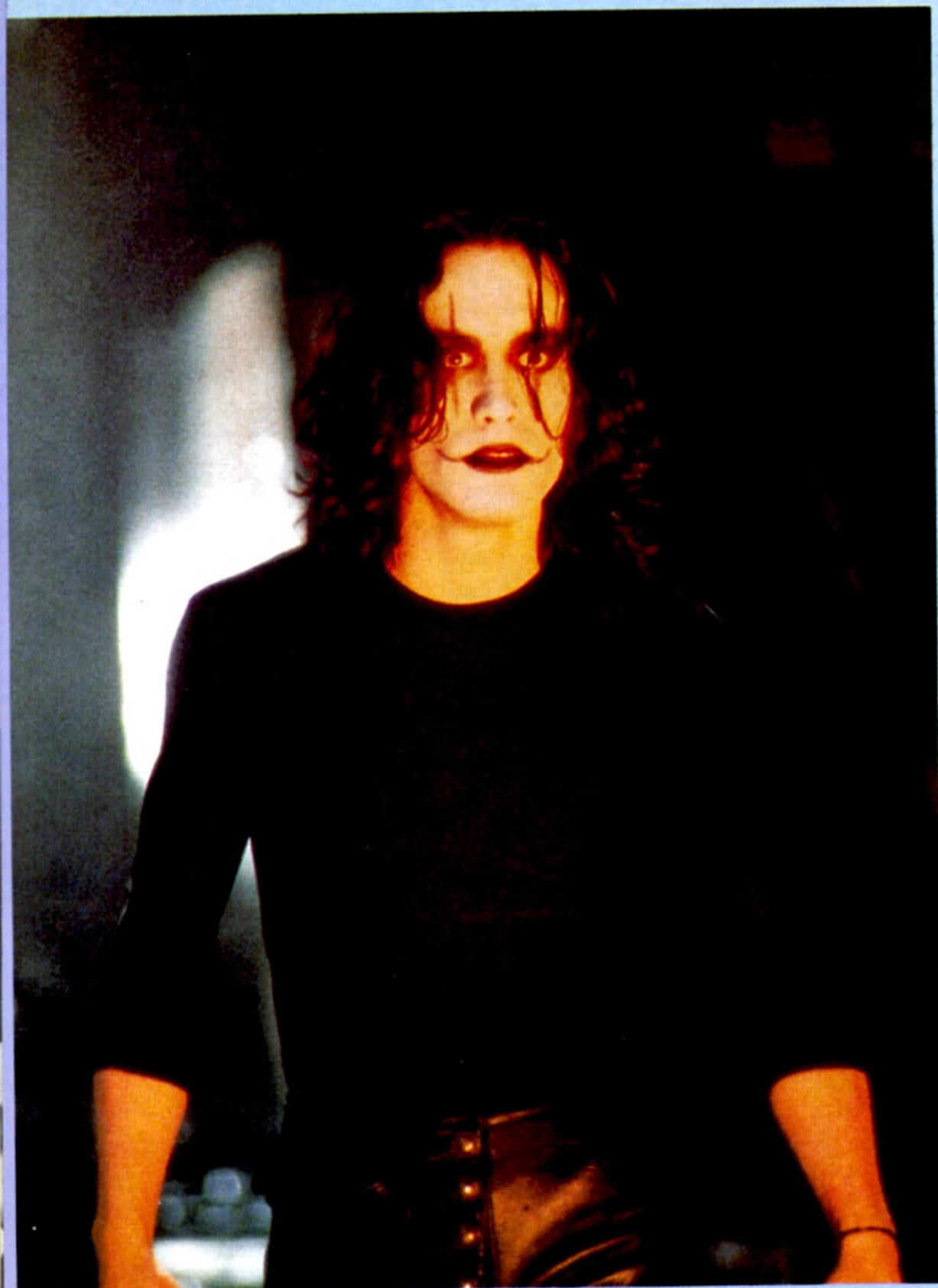
THE CROW was released May 13 under the Dimension banner of Miramax Pictures, who picked up the ill-fated \$13-million Ed Pressman production after Paramount chose not to exercise their negative pick-up option in the wake of the tragic death of the film's star, Brandon Lee. Helmed by award-winning commercial and music video director Alex Proyas, the dark fantasy also stars Ernie Hudson (GHOST-BUSTERS), David Patrick Kelly (DREAMSCAPE), Tony Todd (CANDYMAN), and Michael Wincott (THE THREE

MUSKETEERS). Makeup effects were handled by Lance Anderson (Wes Craven's SHOCKER), and the opticals were provided by Dream Quest Images.

The script by John Shirley and David Schow is based on the adult graphic novel by James O'Barr, which incorporated imagery from both rock-and-roll and gothic horror. The original plot deals with Eric Draven, personal history and profession unknown, who returns to his old neighborhood a year after being shot in the head.

Apparently indestructible, he ignores bullet wounds and a massive dose of morphine to

**Below, the evil triumvirate of villains: (left to right) Tony Todd as Grange, Michael Wincott as Top Dollar and Bai Ling as Myca.**



**Above: Brandon Lee's appearance as the title character in THE CROW bears an uncanny resemblance to the original drawings of J. O'Barr's graphic novel.**





Risen from the grave as an indestructible avenger, Eric Draven confronts one of the men who killed him and his fiancée.

execute a number of dangerous criminals. Through a series of flashbacks, we realize that he is mercilessly hunting down the men who raped and murdered his fiancée, but almost by accident he wipes out a dangerous drug ring in the process. Throughout his adventure he is accompanied by the titular crow, a sort of familiar who importunes Eric not to torture himself by reliving the memories of the formerly happy life that was savagely ripped away from him.

Why a crow? O'Barr originally visualized his avenging angel character accompanied by a giant white rabbit, from a line in ALICE'S ADVEN-

Former music video director Alexander Proyas, on the set.



TURES IN WONDERLAND about being "crazy as a March hare." However, when he found he could not get this to look scary enough, he opted instead for a bird, which since the time of Egyptians has been a harbinger of misery and death.

The story actually began as a form of obscure therapy for O'Barr after his girlfriend was killed by a drunk driver in 1978. Feeling the need for strict regimentation in his life, the artist enlisted with the Marines and did the first 40 pages of the graphic novel while serving in Germany, which helped produce the dark, depressed architecture and weather in his drawings.

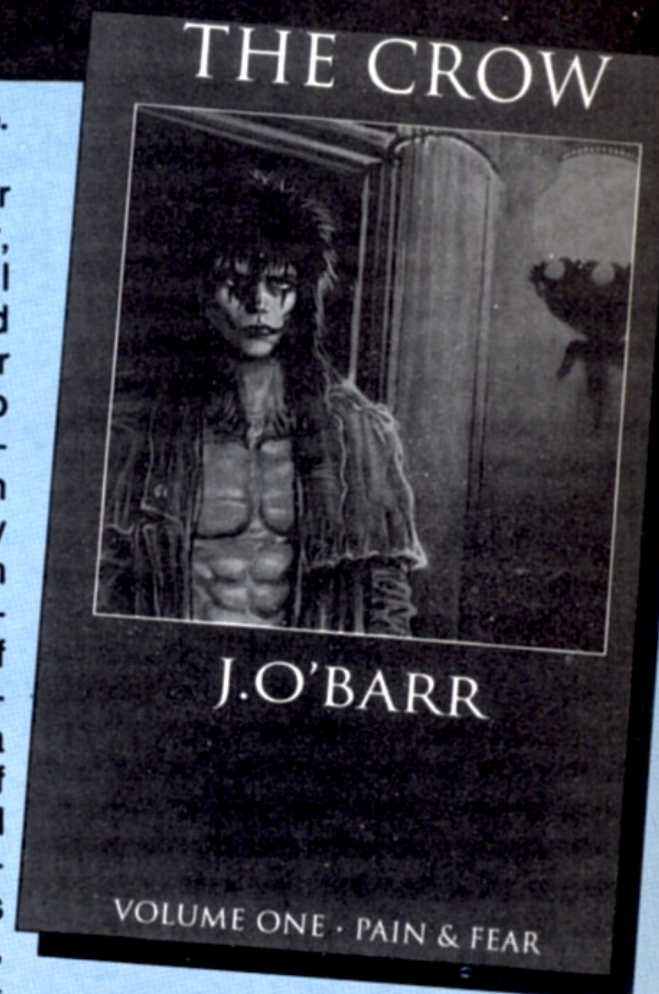
In 1981, he finished the story and began collecting rejection slips from numerous editors who felt the character was depressing and slightly androgynous. The comic was finally published by acquaintance Gerry Reed's Caliber company, in three volumes. Although severely edited, the grim story, atmospheric drawings, and graphic violence developed a strong following among fans of independent comic.

O'Barr was first approached about a film by New Line Cine-

ma, who offered \$60,000 for the film rights to the character, but O'Barr refused to sell all rights to the character. A friend and fan, science fiction author William Gibson set O'Barr up with an agent, who also represented cyberpunk author John Shirley. Coincidentally, Shirley was writing a science fiction script for producer Ed Pressman, and he and partner Jeff Most did a professional treatment of the comic book as a film. When the success of BATMAN: THE MOVIE proved the box office potential of vigilante comic book heroes adapted to the big screen, Pressman asked for a complete script.

Shirley was impressed by the book's combination of Gothic Romance and rock-and-roll imagery. When Eric Draven becomes the Crow, he paints a smiling mask on his face. The look was intended to be ironic, considering the character's total ruthlessness, but it resembles the makeup worn by several bands, such as Kiss and Alice Cooper, and the Crow's habit of carving designs on himself is similar to Iggy Pop's stage act.

Adapting the graphic novel to the big screen involved answering some questions left



deliberately vague in the original. For instance, when asked why, out of all the innocent victims in the world, Eric was chosen to have his special abilities, O'Barr admitted he intentionally avoided specifying whether Eric was a ghost, specter, animated corpse, or a superhuman madman, in order to let the readers decide. O'Barr gave no explanation for the character's apparent return from the grave, except the line, "It's not death if you refuse it."

Shirley, on the other hand, contends that Eric was empowered by unknown forces because "he was destined to



**BRANDON LEE**

**“Eric is a man who has been pushed to the limits of his sanity and finds himself in a situation he is not capable of dealing with, so he creates someone who is, the Crow.”**

**“I could not stop for death, so he kindly stopped for me.” In keeping with the source material, Eric’s look as the Crow suggests a rock-n-roll revenant.**

be the Crow, by the depth of his love.” To Shirley, the Crow is a pure chi force, the force of will sought by Asian martial artists, fueled by romantic obsession.

Shirley did the first four drafts. The final script is by splatterpunk author David Schow. In the comic book, the death of Eric and his fiancée, Shelly, is a purely random act of violence. In the film, they are killed as part of a plot to drive the tenants out of a building by developer Top Dollar (Wincott). We also find out that Eric was a rock musician before his death.

Neither of these changes upset O’Barr very much, but he is concerned about a change in the crow that accompanies Eric. O’Barr’s crow was more symbolic, seen and heard only by Eric, like a voice of reason in his head, calling him back from the dementia that threatens to engulf him whenever his thoughts drift back to his dead fiancée. In the film, the crow is quite substantial, even able to scratch out the eyes of an attacker (Bai Ling as Myca) who has surmised that the bird is Eric’s link

to the spirit world and thus the source of his supernatural powers.

This sort of physical action required some impressive bird wrangling by Gery Gero, of Birds and Animals Unlimited, who utilized four different ravens, each with its own speciality. “Each animal is different,” he explained, “and we just take advantage of that. We have a bird that would sit still, one that is good at flying in and out of things, and a bird that was good at landing on shoulders. A particularly difficult and macabre stunt was training the birds to attack and tear little bits of plastic flesh off of the dummy head.

This missing voice of the crow was to have been replaced by another character. In the book, a skeletal figure of death is twice seen, representing Eric’s loss of his fiancée. The script expanded this silent figure into a mysterious messenger of the dead, the Skull Cowboy, played by THE HILLS HAVE EYES’ Michael Berryman in a complete skeleton suit with exposed ribs and an elaborate prosthetic makeup. The character’s dialogue laid

out the mythology of Eric’s powers much more explicitly than in the comic, but the character was dropped in post-production, apparently part of the re-structuring that took place after Brandon Lee’s death. This cutting moved the film back in the direction of the comic, leaving several questions unanswered. This in turn necessitated a brief voice-over narration, read by Rochelle Davis (who plays a neighborhood kid Eric takes under his wing), telling us that the crow escorts departed souls from this world to the next; but sometimes, when something terrible has happened, a soul cannot rest and must return to earth to finish some task.

Shortly before his death, Brandon Lee commented on the enigma of the character’s return by saying that the Crow “has some powers that make him different than a normal man, but he is still a normal man. He is reacting to a terrible tragedy, the death of the woman he loved. The only thing that makes this remarkable is that his death was involved, and he has come back.”

Of course it is impossible now to watch the film without being influenced by knowledge of what happened on the set, and even relatively matter-of-

fact statements take on a strange resonance in retrospect. For instance, Lee, who had always avoided a bulked appearance, explained his reason for losing even more weight for the movie by observing that he saw the character as having a “real skinny, gaunt, rock-and-roll look, like Iggy Pop. Being as he comes back from the dead, I felt he should not have a real robust appearance.”

Still, even without the regrettable tragedy that seemed to identify the actor with the character he was playing, Lee would have perfectly embodied the Crow as an actor and performer. Although his resemblance to O’Barr’s drawings was more physical than facial, the character’s white face makeup helped the late actor submerge himself in the role. “You are dealing with a man who has been pushed to the limits of his own sanity,” he observed, “and finds himself in a situation that he, Eric Draven, is not really capable of dealing with. Using some of the totems he picks up in his adventures, like the spent shell casing he ties in his hair and the electrical tape he applies to his body, he creates someone who is capable of dealing with the situation, The Crow.” □

**The vicious gang of remorseless thugs, led by David Patrick Kelly’s T-Bird, who murdered Eric and Shelly under orders from Top Dollar.**





# THE CROW

## On-set Tragedy

*A series of accidents led to the death of the film's star.*

By William Wilson Goodson Jr.

On March 31, 1993, at about 12:30 in the morning, Brandon Lee was appearing in a scene wherein his character was supposed to walk through a door carrying a bag of groceries. Actor Michael Masee would then fire a blank at him with a .44 revolver. Lee was to detonate a squib in the grocery bag and collapse, making it seem as though he had been shot.

However, he didn't get up. The emergency medical personnel that were always on the set began CPR. He arrived at the New Hanover Regional Medical Center shortly after 1:00 a.m., with a penetrating wound to the abdomen. He was still alive and, after being stabilized, was taken to surgery. Surgeon Warren W. McMurray, M.D. reported intestinal injuries and major vascular injuries with extensive bleeding.

He was placed in the Intensive Care Unit shortly after 7:00 a.m., but, despite massive transfusions, he died at 1:04 p.m.

His fiancée Eliza Hutton, a story editor, arrived from L.A. shortly before he expired. They had been scheduled to marry in April. His mother, Linda Caldwell, arrived from Idaho, where she lives with her second husband, about five hours later.

On April 3, Brandon Lee was buried beside his father, Bruce Lee, in Seattle, Washington.

Initially, speculation centered on his being wounded by



His vengeance complete, Eric returns to the grave, anticipating a reunion with Shelly.

a fragment of the squib. However, the next day an autopsy discovered an actual .44 bullet lodged near his spine. There was no immediate explanation as to why there would be live ammo on a movie set. Rumors that the pistol had been borrowed for target shooting appeared.

The official ruling by investigators of the NC Labor Department's Division of Occupational Safety and Health was that live .44-calibre bullets had been used to produce dummy bullets.

Dummy bullets look just like real bullets, but have no powder charge inside so they can't explode. They are used for closeups of a gun. Blank cartridges are designed to explode for sound effects, but lack the slug, the tip of a cartridge that is actually propelled from the gun. The gun powder was removed from some live bullets to make dummies.

One of the dummy bullets

still contained enough powder so that when the gun was fired, the slug on the tip separated from the bullet and lodged in the barrel.

Later, when the blank was fired, it propelled the slug out of the Smith and Wesson Magnum revolver as if it were being normally fired.

Crowvision Inc., the production company for THE CROW, was fined \$70,000 for allowing live ammunition on the set, \$7,000 for not having the guns checked between each scene, and \$7,000 for not prohibiting the firing of guns at persons during filming, as well as not having protective shields for all personnel in close proximity to blanks being fired from a weapon.

Executive producer Bob Rosen responded, "We made every effort to comply with all applicable OSHA safety standards. We do not believe there is any basis for the citations,

and intend to appeal all of them."

How could such a series of accidents occur? Most theories center around the fact that the non-union crew had been working long hours, often at night, and made some mistakes through exhaustion. Their firearms consultant, James Macer, had been released since all scenes with automatic weapons had already been finished. It has not been revealed who actually loaded the gun or handed it to Masee.

Michael Masee has not made any public statement, so we don't know why he aimed the gun directly at Lee. However, he was being filmed from two angles. He may have been unsure which direction he could point the gun and still look like he was aiming at Lee.

The lack of protective vest was probably because the squib was in the grocery bag, not attached to him.

Wilmington D.A. Jerry Spivey has announced there will be no negligent homicide charges. Also, Crowvision Inc. and Edward R. Pressman Film Corporation have reached a settlement in the lawsuit brought by Brandon Lee's estate. An undisclosed payment will be made to his mother, Linda Cadwell, and his fiancée, Eliza Hutton.

Immediately after the accident, the official word was that a month would be taken to assess whether or not completion of the film would be possible, although rumor had it that

continued on page 61

# LOIS & CLARK

## We examine what makes the "New Adventures of Superman" fly.

By Anthony P. Montesano

The Greeks have Hercules; the British have King Arthur. In the United States, we have Superman. For over half a century, he has fought for "truth, justice and the American way." Lately, the legend of the great American hero has taken two distinct directions. In the comics, the writers have further explored the implicit similarities Superman has to Christ, while on television, "the strange being from another planet" is being given human dimensions far beyond those ever bestowed on him before.

This past season, LOIS & CLARK joined NBC's Steven Spielberg series SEAQUEST DSV on Sunday nights in an all-out attack on CBS's venerable MURDER, SHE WROTE. While neither show has been able to topple the Angela Lansbury series (which still finishes in the top 20), LOIS & CLARK has been laying waste to its co-competitor SEAQUEST DSV, consistently finishing second in its time slot. Over the season, LOIS & CLARK's audience has solidified, while SEA QUEST sinks deeper and deeper into the ratings abyss.

In *The Adventures of Superman* #500, Superman was raised from the dead by his father, who traveled into the netherworld to bring his son back to life. This logical progression of the Superman myth is in line with the traditional Christ-like telling of his story. In his book, *Angels: An Endangered Species*, Malcolm Godwin compared the Man of Steel to the ethereal spirits: "The benevolent guardian angel of the 1940's was, of course, Superman. While a cloak replaced the wings, this expression of the all-powerful guardian archetype, who battled the evil dragons of satanic violence, greed and injustice, replaced the Archangel Michael in the popular imagination. On the one hand he was timid Mr. Everyman of the city streets and offices and yet in the next instant he was transformed into the super-



Creator and executive producer Deborah Joy LeVine: "When I was asked to take on the series, I said, 'Let's forget the myth as we know it. How would this really happen?'"

natural, righteous angel of mercy." Among the famed archangels are Michael, Raphael and Gabriel. Superman's birth name is Kal-el, given by his father Jor-el. The word "-el" is ancient, with a long and complex etymological history. It basically means "the shining one, a radiant being."

While the DC comics are taking the myth of Superman deeper and deeper into its mystic Judaic-Christian roots, LOIS & CLARK reinvents the story on a very human level, with unprecedented artistic success. Like every great mythic hero, Superman's story has to be retold time and again to relate to each new generation with a need to embrace it. Until now, however, the story of this hero has failed to ex-

plore the deeper humanness of the alien from Krypton.

The weekly series on ABC has changed all of that. Never before has the Superman story been approached so refreshingly or with so much verve. LOIS & CLARK has flipped the myth on its head and created the finest, most honed examination of these characters ever. This Superman is a 'man' first, 'super' second. He's unsure of his destiny. And Clark Kent isn't the disguise this time out—the Superman costume is.

"I never read a comic book in my life except for *Archie*. In my house they were verboten," says Deborah Joy LeVine, the creator, executive producer, and writer of the show. But the responsibility she felt when she was asked to create the new Superman series changed all that. "Of course, I was concerned about the fans, so I went out and read 300 comics, and now I'm hooked. I was actually surprised by how sophisticated the storylines were."

It's fitting that the creator of LOIS & CLARK is so fresh to the genre, because she has succeeded in doing something a host of writers have not been able to do for over 50 years with the Superman myth: she's made Superman and Clark interesting characters.

In the 1950s on TV's THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN, George Reeves' Superman was merely functional, with no more than a brotherly fondness for Lois. While Phyllis Coates' Lois (in the show's first season) had a sensual edge a tad ahead of its time, Noel Neill's Lois (for the remainder of the series) was a passive goodie-two-shoes. In the late '70s and early '80s, Christopher Reeve's Superman, while passionate for Lois, was as stiff as a board. Margot Kidder's Lois was all edge but not enough curves. In LOIS & CLARK, Dean Cain's interpretation hits all the right notes. For the first time Clark is as interesting as Superman. Both genuinely deserve the affections of Lois.

Unlike the previous screen incarnations, we're rooting for Clark to score points with her. We don't pity him or feel indifferent: we like him, and we want Lois to see that she doesn't necessarily need a Superman to fulfill her dreams. Clark's victory with Lois is a victory for the average, nice guy everywhere. And clearly, given the characters' progression thus far in the series, the writers feel the same way. Lois is falling for Clark, even as she pines for Superman. In the program's Clark/Superman character we truly have the soul of Cyrano embodied in Christian. And Lois is learning she can fall—imperfections and all—for the man with the glasses as well as the super-man without them. The show has portrayed the two as kindred spirits. LOIS & CLARK allows us for the first time to examine the real relationship that develops between these people who have been courting each other in every medium for over half a century.

How has LeVine been able to breathe new life into characters that have been seen in comics, on TV, in the movies, in animated shorts, and heard on radio for over half a century? "When I was asked to take on the series, I said, 'Let's forget the Superman myth as we know it. How would this *really* happen if an alien revealed himself on earth in 1993? Then, I concentrated on the relationship of the two main characters. I see them as essentially the same person. Both of them wear disguises. They're thrown together by fate. Lois is always trying to pretend she can handle it all when in fact she is very vulnerable and seeking love."

In the actress Teri Hatcher, Lois Lane has finally found her most appealing, sensuous, intelligent, independent, yet sweetly vulnerable embodiment. Hatcher's Lane is at once leather and lace: on the



Teri Hatcher and Dean Cain allow us to explore a real relationship between this couple who have been courting for half a century.

surface a fiercely competitive career woman, in her soul a caring, needing innocent. She'll risk her life for a story by day but sleep with stuffed animals and cry while watching soap operas at night. That Hatcher has been able to believably sustain both extremes of Lois' personality for the duration of the series thus far is a tribute to both her acting abilities and the cleverness of the series' writers.

LOIS & CLARK's supporting cast is equally as fleshed out. All the traditional characters are there, but they now fit into a slightly different mold: Ma and Pa Kent talk to their super son on a cellular phone from Smallville, and Martha Kent has her own fax. In the

hands of veteran character actor Lane Smith, *Daily Planet* Editor-in-Chief Perry White is at once likable and cantankerous; an Elvis fan, his famed expression, "Great Cesar's Ghost!" has been replaced with "Great Shades of Elvis!" And Lex Luther has traded his purple jump suit and bald head for Armani suits and cigars; as played by John Shea, the character has been reinvented as an evil corporate raider—Donald Trump with the devil on his back. His threat doesn't come from concoctions in a chemistry lab, but from the fact that he's the third wealthiest man in the world, with his hand in almost every industry.



"I wanted the series to feel real," says LeVine. "I wanted it to reflect life in the '90s. But making it real didn't mean we needed to exclude being funny." LeVine isn't afraid to make Lois vulnerable as well as independent: if that leads to humorous situations then so be it. In early episodes, Clark struggles with controlling his super powers—often to genuine hilarity. LeVine also holds that darker aspects of the show benefit as well from her commitment to staying rooted in reality and strong character development. "Evil today comes in Armani suits and handsome packages, like David Duke," says LeVine. "Realism is much scarier than any monster we can come up with." In fact, the evil on LOIS & CLARK has not come from outer space or laboratories but rather from the corporate, government and medical establishments.

According to LeVine, ABC has been conducting extensive focus group test screenings of LOIS & CLARK to measure which aspects of the show fly. "I don't like it," admits LeVine. "One group said they found it hard to believe that a man of Perry White's stature would be an

Elvis fan. Why not? When I practiced law, I knew a reputable judge who was obsessed with Charo."

The show, according to LeVine has already affected Superman's original medium, the comic book. "The writers and artists at DC Comics are taking a few cues from us," says LeVine. "Martha Kent's on a diet and will soon resemble K Callan [the actress who play her in LOIS & CLARK]; Lois Lane is cutting her hair, a la Teri Hatcher's Lois, and Perry White will start saying 'Great Shades of Elvis' in the comics from now on." □

# THE LION KING

**Disney's next animation blockbuster roars into theatres this summer.**

By Dan Scapperotti

After a decade of lackluster Disney productions and the failed promise of Don Bluth, the success of *THE LITTLE MERMAID* has started an animation renaissance, the like of which hasn't been seen since *SNOW WHITE*, and Disney craftsmen are now trying to double Walt's original dream of an animated feature per year, with



Top: Rafiki (Robert Guillaume) upbraids Simba (Matthew Broderick) for abandoning the throne after his father's death. Left: directors Rob Minkoff, Roger Allers & producer Don Hahn.



such projects as *POCAHONTAS* and *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* in prep.

This June, Disney releases its 32nd animated feature, *THE LION KING*, produced by Don Hahn and directed by Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff. The story follows Simba, the Lion King's son, from childhood through self-imposed exile to his eventual return to reclaim the throne from his uncle Scar, who murdered the Lion King and usurped the title.

Charlie Fink developed the premise, a sort of riff on *HAM-*

*LET*, which Jeffrey Katzenberg quickly envisioned as a coming-of-age story with lions in Africa. Put in charge of the project was Don Hahn, who had worked with the legendary Woolie Reitherman for several years as a production manager before turning producer with *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*, which garnered him an Academy Award nomination. "What excited everyone about this," he says, "was that we had never done a story based in Africa; we never did a story that was completely allegorical. About two-and-a-half years ago, when Elton John was suggested, we all thought that if he did songs this movie would be really unique."

That idea became a reality with the help of lyricist Tim Rice, who was at the studio completing lyrics for *ALADDIN* while trying to develop a screen adaptation of *EVITA*. Elton John eventually composed five songs for the film,

including the stunning opener "Circle of Life," which Hahn describes as "one of those moments—and we're fortunate to have several of them—where music, color, animation, and storytelling all come together to create something very special. For me the benchmarks of the film are that and when Simba has grown up and Rafiki, the wise monkey, leads him to the pool to see his reflection. He tells Simba his father lives inside of him, and then his father appears to him and tells him to go back. The spiritual content of that, along with the music and the animation, is really something very special. The core of this movie is about the day when you have to grow up, when your parents say, 'Okay, we've done all we can; now it's your responsibility.'"

The film has some dark moments as the young Simba must come to terms with the death of his father and the

treachery of his uncle, but there are moments of comic relief provided by Scar's sniveling henchmen, the hyenas. The voice characterizations had to combine the treachery of the animals as well as a light side. "While we knew the hyenas were comedic characters, they had to be villainous yet funny," explains Hahn. "We went through a variety of comedy teams with various accents and ethnic backgrounds. One day someone came up with the idea of Cheech and

Chong. We thought it would be great to get Cheech but put him with somebody else. We were looking mainly for guys when someone suggested Whoopi Goldberg. She was working on *SISTER ACT* at the time, and we thought that would be the most unlikely pairing of two comedians you could find; yet, when they're together, it's very funny."

Simba: "You're so weird." Scar: "You have no idea." (a la *REVERSAL OF*







During the opening song, "Circle of Life," the jungle animals gather to celebrate the birth of Simba, heir to the throne.

Co-directors Allers and Rob Minikoff worked for two years on story development, then directed the voice talent prior to animation. The search for just the right voices to bring life to the characters can be an arduous task, as Allers explains: "We sit around with the casting personnel and with our concept of the character, and we try to find a voice that will support or enrich that idea. Then we go through an incredible numbers of tryouts. On *THE LION KING* we had hundreds of people come through."

Some characters were easier to cast than others. Jeremy Irons was a natural for Scar. "We always knew we wanted that kind of intelligent, manipulative villain," says Hahn. The role of Zazu, Mufasa's hornbill

**FORTUNE).** Could this be Irons' version of "I'll be back"?



right-hand man assigned to keep the young Simba out of trouble, was offered to Rowan Atkinson, but the comedian had reservations. Hahn, having lived in London while working on *WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT*, knew Atkinson from British TV's hilarious *BLACK ADDER* and *MR BEAN*, but, he says, "Rowan felt he was a physical comedian, and his strength was in his persona. We showed him some storyboards of his character, and he loved it."

While Atkinson was pondering the role, casting calls continued. One found director Roger Allers in New York. "We were auditioning people," says the director, "and two actors from *GUYS AND DOLLS* came in, Ernie Lane and Nathan Sabella. Nathan came in for Zazu the hornbill and Ernie came in for the hyena. They worked up a routine for the hyenas which was very funny. So I held onto their audition tape, and later when we were still looking for the warthog and the meerkat, we put them on, and it absolutely clicked."

Early in the project, Disney sent Allers and four others to Africa on a two week safari, which paid off in the film's stunning visuals, such as the opening scene of a herd of elephants slowly moving through

a ground mist at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro.

"Everyday we'd go out in the Land Rovers from dawn to dusk," says Allers. "We'd photograph our heads off and get very close to the wildlife. We stayed at Sweetwater Camp in the area of the Samburu Tribe. We came back with really interesting impressions of Africa."

Although the film is a fable of the animal kingdom, the filmmakers didn't shy away from the violent side of life and death on the savannah. "There was a lot of debate about the violence content," Allers admits. "Roy Disney and Jeff Katzenberg wanted to make this picture really about the animal kingdom. They didn't want to stint on portraying them as they are—how dramatic the struggle of life is. So we didn't shy away from showing animals in conflict: the violence of the stampede, or the war between the lions and the hyenas. In real life, they are enemies. Hyenas sometimes chase lions away from their own kill. One evening we watched a mother cheetah and her two cubs stalking. The next day we rediscovered them somewhere else, and they had made a kill. It was some sort of antelope. To watch the cubs gnawing away at the antelope and then popping up with their



little whiskers all covered with blood was certainly a vivid picture of what goes on there. We didn't want to pussyfoot around that, so we had the king, Mufasa (James Earl Jones) teaching Simba about the balance of nature: how everything preys upon one another, that there is a balance, and that they are all connected, which is the circle of life we refer to. We wanted to dignify that and not hide from it. There is a dignity to nature."

Although the film is set in the animal kingdom, *THE LION KING* is a human story. "You could change all the animals to people," explains Allers, "and it would still be the same story: the story of maturation, the story of the struggle for power in a kingdom, the story of deceit and treachery—all those things are more the human world. We didn't start out to tell the day in the life of an animal; it was more a human story using animals." □

# W

## Howling

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

As high concept, it may prove unique in the annals of horror moviedom: hire a world-class director, cinematographer, and production designer; bring in the best makeup artists money can buy; provide the proper mood music, and make a werewolf movie with as little makeup and as few special effects as possible. Oh, did I mention finding an actor who already looks like a wolf?

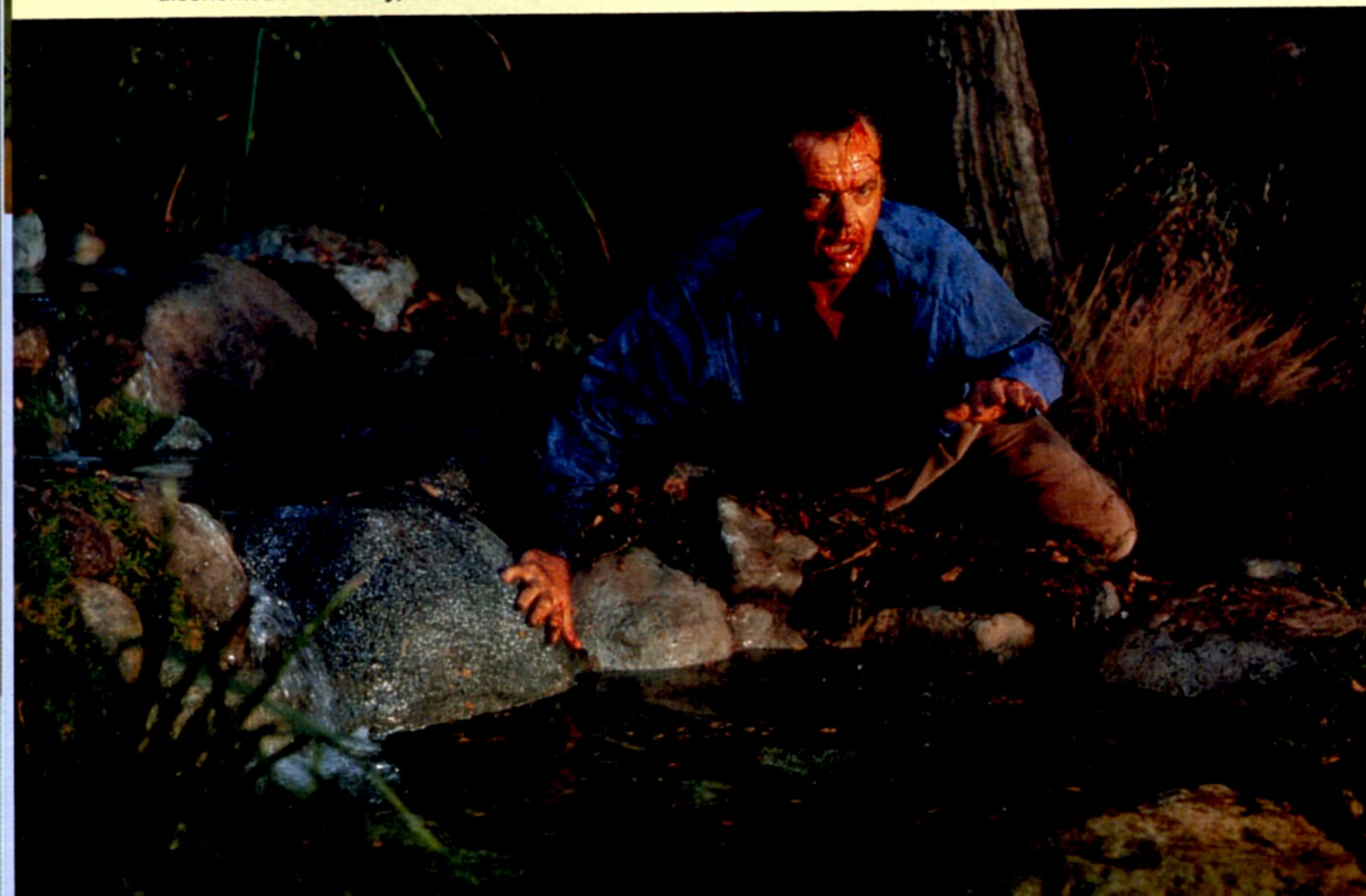
WOLF, Columbia Pictures' upscale werewolf movie, had its release delayed from March to June 15, after an advance test screening convinced the studio that the film is strong enough to compete in the lucrative summer arena. A prime concern of the filmmakers had been whether or not star Jack Nicholson's transformation into the title character would be taken seriously, but audience reaction at the screening allayed any fears.

"Either we've done our work well," says director Mike Nichols, "or there is something to the idea. Maybe we're living in a fool's paradise—which can also happen to a movie. But in this one, you simply accept it's happening because you're looking at it."

A certain awe creeps into Nichols' voice as he describes a scene. It astounded him when he first saw it storyboarded in video, and it astounds him now, in 35mm. "He [Nicholson] catches a goddamned deer. He chases it, catches it, and kills it. And you accept it because *you're looking at it*. There was a weird thing about it, where you look at it and say, 'I know this; this is my dream in



The original concept of doing a werewolf movie without a werewolf makeup gave way to the Rick Baker approach (above), which accentuated Jack Nicholson's naturally wolfish countenance. Below: Nicholson's Will Randall, disoriented and bloody, cleans himself off in the forest after a transformation during which he killed and ate a deer.



# OLF

at you in June.

some way.”

To give shape to his dreams, Nichols strived to rethink the look of a werewolf to reflect his own minimalism. The original idea of *WOLF* [see *Makeup Effects sidebar*] was to make a werewolf movie sans lupine appliances. This proved impossible to realize. But Nichols did try seriously to take some shears to the werewolf metaphor as it has evolved in motion pictures. Whether or not he achieved it, Nichols was clearly after something more substantial than Michael Landon or Michael J. Fox in leather jackets and hairy chests.

“It seemed to me from the beginning, when I considered the genre,” says Nichols, “that there are certain genres, like the vampire, in which the metaphor is so powerful, so clear, and so constant you never need to explain or question it. It’s always there. It’s echoed all around us, all the time, in many people. It exists in our dreams and wishes and fears.

“But a man becoming a wolf and the moon and the night and the werewolf of it all—these provide a much shakier metaphor. It is also such an extreme metaphor—the situation was so extreme. *WOLF* was the most difficult movie to make I have ever worked on, and not least finally because we kept thinking, it’s possible that people will say, ‘What are you doing, what do you mean he’s turning into a wolf—are you nuts?’”

Historically, in fact, the bourgeois werewolf has always taken second billing behind his more refined and ennobled vampire twin. Maybe it’s a

class thing. Maybe, it’s all in the way they come on. Vampires are sexy because they seduce with taste and flourish. Werewolves tend toward a more direct, somewhat messier approach to matters of love. Whatever the case, epidemic reporting of vampirism in Europe, as evidenced, for example between 1730 and 1735, have often been accompanied by similar outbursts of werewolf sightings. Between 1520 and 1630, there were over 30,000 such reports out of central France alone.

Vampires and werewolves share obvious attributes. Both are shapeshifters. Both carry contagion. And both frequently resort to magic. But the werewolf has probably remained the most problematic of popular archetypes. “We seem to lack some essential key to the subject,” observes British phenomenalist Colin Wilson, the author of *Space Vampires* (adapted for film by Tobe Hooper as *LIFEFORCE*). “If werewolves are not merely



Randall’s transformations, at first energizing, soon turn monstrous.

some absurd human delusion, then they are evidence of some power of the human mind that we do not at present understand.”

It is a little ironic that, although prepared to offer some credence to the phenomenon of lycanthropy, the credulous Wilson has also dismissed the Holocaust as the fictional fruit of human delusion. That failing

notwithstanding, Nichols appears to have been forced to concur with Wilson’s basic take on the werewolf. In consequence, the director has cast his nets further afield than most in his search for added mythic significance.

The movies were no great help. The genre has seen its share of werewolf pictures, from *THE WEREWOLF OF LONDON* (1935), *THE WOLF MAN* (1940) and *THE CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF* (1961) to *THE HOWLING* (1980), *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON* (1981), and *WOLFEN* (1981). Between these efforts and such parodies as *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF* (1957) and the *TEEN WOLF* movies (1985, '87), one runs the gamut of physical and psychic transformation. As Peter Nichols observed in *The World of Fantastic Films*, the concept of the werewolf as the battleground between id and super-ego eventually found itself buried under a mountain of

A reluctant Nicholson submits to the makeup chair, at the hands of Rick Baker.



# WOLF

## PRODUCTION DESIGN

*Bo Welch pared down external expressions of the fantastic.*

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

Production designer Bo Welch signed on to *WOLF* anticipating major flights of fancy.

Director Mike Nichols hired him, he says, because he liked his work on *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS*. But what the man who created the look of such set stunners as *BEETLEJUICE* and *BATMAN RETURNS* got may have seemed more like a short jaunt to Vegas aboard a Southwest Airlines L.A.-based commute.

The movie, as originally conceived, began with the capture of werewolves from the misty tundra of Carpathia. Cut to the deck of an illegal Russian freighter as it pulls in to New York Harbor. Later on, there are prison scenes, as wild animals hurl themselves against bars that become as ubiquitous a symbol of oppression as crucifixes in *DRACULA*.

"When we first attacked the movie," he recalls, "it was going to be a little more surreal. It just evolved into something more realistic. And as it got pared down, it became more austere."

Welch isn't complaining. "The original Jim Harrison script had all kinds of great stuff in it," he says, "including the kind of sex you just know that Michelle Pfeiffer won't do even with a body double. But when you got through the Gothic touches and flourishes, what else was there?"

"I sort of liked the script at first," he says. "It was lean, not overly jacked-up with commercial-type incidence. It was a



Welch, noted for his fanciful sets in Tim Burton's films, had to adopt a more naturalistic style in *WOLF*.

matter-of-fact story, if there is such a thing, of a guy turning into a wolf. But initially, I'm not sure anyone had a feel for the material. You read it and were drawn to the literary aspects of it. But when you got down to visualizing the movie scene by scene, it didn't really add up."

Welch says he felt disappointment, initially, at the movie's shrinking from external expressions of the fantastic. But he hastens to note that his resume also includes work on such films as *THE ACCIDENTAL TOURIST* and *GRAND CANYON*. For him, the challenges inherent in making a preposterous idea less preposterous are every bit as daunting as informing the everyday with magic.

"To me, the word 'realistic' doesn't really mean anything. I think *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS* is realistic. It's the reality you create. You have to buy

it whether it's fantastic or mundane. I'm aiming for something you believe within the context of this story that enhances the scene content. That's just the normal definition of the job.

"There are always areas to take off imaginatively in even the most boring movies," he says. "I want to be known as a production designer who can do both kinds of movies—realistic and unrealistic—well. What I learn out of one and bring to the other is a cross fertilization that makes each work better."

Welch thinks Nichols may have been prescient in insisting on toning down the genre elements in *WOLF*. It is hard to imagine Nichols making a movie that could outdo the existing crop of landmark films in terms of their creature effects.

"I think Mike [Nichols] thought of this movie as a metaphor for an anemic society where people are not allowed to express their animal sides," says Welch. "He saw a realistic, human kind of conflict there, and I think he may have been drawn to the love story."

"It's also one of those stories that has been told over and over again because it strikes some kind of primal fear. For the male, the idea of sort of putting your good behavior aside and doing the kinds of things you really like to do and having a voracious appetite, wanting sex and not feeling like you can be pushed around and retaliating at the injustices heaped upon you in the course of your life—these are the things that make it appealing." □

churning makeup prosthetics.

**A**fter watching the genre culminate in the flesh-crawling antics of Rob Bottin and Rick Baker, Nichols might have done well before joining this enterprise to rewatch the scene in *ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN*, wherein Lon Chaney warns Bud Abbott he's going to turn into a wolf when the moon rises. Abbott's response would have sent chills down Nichols' spine: "Yeah, you and about five million other guys."

"In the old wolfman movies," observes *WOLF* producer Doug (WORKING GIRL) Wick, "once you say a guy is a killer—that every time he goes out he chews up a bunch of women—it becomes tedious and boring."

Hormones still figure prominently in Nichols' cosmology. The werewolf, Nichols says, "is about a raging hard-on, about man's uncontrollable sexual side. I don't know how to tell the story otherwise, because the metaphor is completely meaningless if he's just sort of growing hair at random...it isn't about uncontrollable urges toward sex and violence."

"In *WOLF*, it's two things at once: a fantasy metaphor for the ways in which the world is actually changing and the viruses and strangenesses loose in the world; and at the same time, it's very much the moment—it's happening right this minute, in a very urban place. It's more about the actual end of the world. The sense that it is happening to more than just our hero, that this is really happening in a physical world going crazy—that's an important part of our idea."

Viruses and apocalypse. If one squints, it becomes possible to imagine that Walter Hill and David Giler are contemplating their second *ALIEN* sequel. The problem for Nichols—one Hill, Giler and Fincher never quite surmounted in *ALIEN*<sup>3</sup>—was finding an effective means to infuse the material with the appropriate thematic resonance. In *WOLF*, this was never easy. While producer Wick insists that much of writer Jim Harrison's story survived subsequent drafts struc-

turally intact, there were problems early on.

Harrison's script began with Randall visiting the New York docks to pick up a package for a friend. Once there, he is brought together for that fateful first bite with a werewolf pup that has somehow made its way from the Russian Steppes aboard a Baltic freighter. By the time the meeting is arranged and the dirty deed is done, unfortunately, nearly a third of the running time has been consumed. If the point of the film was to have some fun exploring the implications of

## WEREWOLF TRANSFORMATION

**“Either we’ve done our homework, or maybe we’re living in a fool’s paradise—which can happen on a movie,” says Nichols. “In this you accept it because you’re seeing it.”**



Randall's canine rejuvenation results in an affair with Pfeiffer's character while a detective suspects he murdered his wife.

Nicholson's metamorphosis, this was downtime the production could ill-afford.

“I came to the project tentatively when Doug Wick brought me the first Jim Harrison script,” recounts Nichols. “Jim is an old friend, someone I admire and like. Jack [Nicholson] and I were simultaneously drawn to it and afraid of it. We kept circling the script and the idea. As we worked on it and began putting our ideas into it, Elaine [May] began to create a script in which our subterranean feeling about the apocalypse was sort of ingested into the script. We both began to feel very drawn to it.

“I was very interested in the reality of Harrison's approach, but I was always backing away from it. I guess it was not knowing why the hell Randall was turning into a wolf, what it [the story] was about and for. I said, ‘Well, Christ, the metamorphosis should start, *bang*, in the first sentence. Why don't we just start with it, accept it as a given as the central metaphor, and just do it?’”

Production designer Bo Welch recalls that Harrison's version seemed more literary, if possible, than the shooting

script Wesley Strick and May eventually developed. “It had a lot more meat and sex in it. But it was even a little more ludicrous in terms of logical events.”

“I don't know that the Harrison version had far more sex in it,” replies Nichols. “It may have had a *little* more sex in it. But I think this one is in fact sexier and more romantic.”

Nichols and Wick believed they could bring the story down to earth by taking their cue from Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. In that novel, Gregor Sams wakes up one day having turned into a bug. Kafka expended precious little fuss and bother in explaining the transformation; it simply happens, and literally everything else in the story unfolds in sublimely banal fashion.

“We talked about that a lot,” says Wick. “It became totally engaging because you understood the rules of the story. It was never archly surreal—it just was.”

There were other problems. Notably, Harrison appeared to have consciously avoided the usual props and fixtures found in werewolf tales. The script

initially involved less howling than at the beginning of *ADAMS FAMILY VALUES*. Much of the action took place during the day, and references to the moon and the night were incidental at best. It's one thing to send your wolfman to the barber for a trim; sending him to the vet for spaying, however, is a travesty.

“When I first came aboard,” explains Nichols, “there were no nights; there was no moon; there were no genre aspects at all, and I said ‘I really can't do without them.’ We observed and paid attention to the dictates of the genre in that you have to know the rules. The moon and all that it implies for darkness is terribly important both in words and images. Plus the apocalyptic aspect—the dying and disintegration of New York and attendant civilization—these are all very important to the movie.

“But I don't think of *WOLF* as a genre movie,” continues Nichols. “It's very much its own strange category. It doesn't observe many of the werewolf conventions, such as changing into a sort of monster at night and disemboweling nurses.

There's no Maria Ouspenskaya and silver-headed canes and spells and wolfsbane and other genre trappings. It's more about the actual end of the world as it's occurring to all of us and people changing under the pressure of the end of the world.”

Screenwriter Elaine May helped nail down the reality of the premise with her take on the New York literary scene. There are almost as many dropped names and cultural zingers in this script as in *WAYNE'S WORLD 2*. “I think Elaine brought some wit and immediacy to the project,” says Nichols. “She was particularly helpful with the specificity of the characters. What kind of a world they were in? They were in a world in which Judith Krantz is a best seller and studios buy books for Steven Seagal. It is a specific, contemporary world. A world in which people at parties talk about viruses sweeping the world as a result of the death of the rain forests. Will is a publisher—these are his concerns. And all around him, New York is disintegrating. It's been dug up and left to molder. There's a scene in which he passes a construction site with workers calling to each other in dozens of different languages. It's the Tower of Babel—that

Faced with incarceration, Randall goes from attractive to ominous.



## WEREWOLF METAPHOR

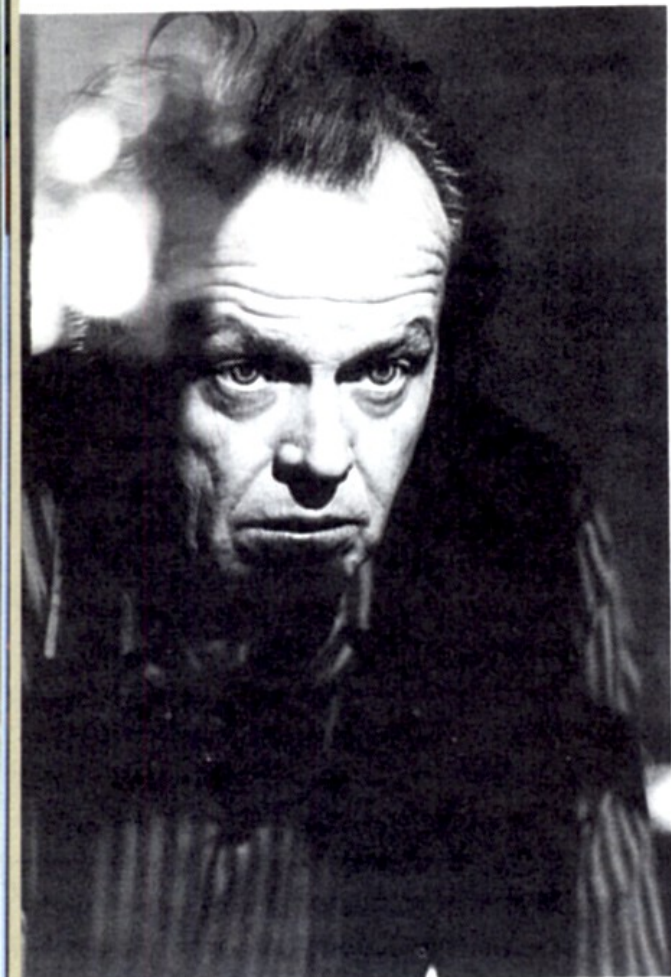
**“It seemed to me that there are certain genres in which the metaphor is so powerful you never need to explain it,” says Nichols. “It exists in our dreams.”**

kind of gently apocalyptic atmosphere in which we all live.”

May will not be getting credit for her work on the film, nor, says Nichols, did she ask for any. “There was the usual Writer’s Guild brouhaha about Strick and Jim and that stuff they do—weighing the pages, etc.,” says Nichols. “They ended up with a credit for Harrison, which, God knows, he should have—it’s his idea, his story, his impulse and Strick who did indeed do a lot of good work.”

“In spirit,” adds Wick, “it’s almost exactly the same story as the Harrison script. In Jim’s script, Will gets bitten, smells his wife, finds out about his best friend, has nocturnal wanderings, his wife is killed, he thinks he did it. That structure remains. We got some help from Elaine with movie-movie stuff, and in finally adapting it for Mike Nichols. It works much better now. What we and the audience will want to explore, presumably, is what happens

Randall is haunted by his own uncertainty about whether he could have killed his wife.



to this character from having the spirit of the wolf in him.”

**B**ecause Nichols and Wick did not want to go the slasher route, they had to find some other facet of the experience to explore. In that respect, they may have taken their cue not from Kafka but from Stephen Sondheim and Bruno Bettelheim. In classic fairy tales—a point Bettelheim has expounded on in essays and Sondheim drove home with priapic effect in the stage production of *Into the Woods*—there are worse things than being a wolf—so long, that is, as you don’t mind the woodsman’s ax.

“Jack becomes increasingly enhanced,” says Wick. “He becomes powerful at home and in his workplace. He becomes powerful in love. In a vulgar sense, I used to think of the movie as Willy Loman eats spinach. You really get the fun of being enhanced that way.

“This is where Mike was such an interesting choice for us,” continues Wick. “The movie was about studying incremental change. The first half of the movie we are exploring increased sense of smell, of sight, of becoming sensorially aware of your world.”

In a sense, Wick could almost be talking about David Cronenberg’s remake of *THE FLY*. In that film, Jeff Goldblum’s initial transformation into the Brundlefly begins with unusual prowess, both physical and sexual. Eventually, however, things get sticky. But Wick demurs at the comparison, and not just because of the minimal makeup used to deck up Nicholson.

*THE FLY*, says Wick, took place in one room. “If that guy had tried to interface with society—well, it’s just not possible the way he looked. Part of our

# WOLF

## AMALGAMATED EFFECTS, INC.

*Animatronics picked up where Baker left off.*

*By Sheldon Teitelbaum*

The climax of Mike Nichols’ *WOLF* is a barnyard battle that pits Wolfman Jack Nicholson against dog-eared James Spader, with survival, and comely Michelle Pfeiffer—who by this point looks quite eager to go to the dogs—as the prize.

Responsibility for making the scene work fell to Nichols, his stunt men, and the actors, who, in uncharacteristic intervention, coached their doubles on how their characters might comport themselves in a fight. Also involved, however, were Tom Woodruff and Alec Gillis, co-owners of Amalgamated Dynamics, the Chatsworth-based effects house whose mechanical deer and wolves kept the animal rights crowd and continuity mavens from snapping at Nichols’ heels.

Their task was to provide mechanical models of Nicholson’s and Spader’s snarling heads for various closeups during this animal daring-do. To make sure what they had in mind for the scene was something Nichols could live with, they spent a busy weekend blocking out some of the head sequences in a short video. This they trotted before Nichols bright and early one Monday morning like two school boys who had outdone themselves on their science project.

Nichols watched the black and white video for a few moments, gazed back at the two effects men, and in a hushed

voice, said “That’s it?”

“My God,” thought Gillis, his and Woodruff’s heart falling into their socks. “Was he expecting something else?”

“You mean that’s not Jack’s head,” shouted Nichols. “This is wonderful! That’s it, that’s it!”

“We nearly lost it,” recalls Woodruff.

Tom Woodruff and Alec Gillis emerged from Stan Winston’s shop in 1988. Since then, they’ve distinguished themselves with such films as *TREMORS*, *THE GRIFTERS*, *ALIEN<sup>3</sup>*, some *TALES FROM THE CRYPT* episodes and *DEMOLITION MAN*, to which they contributed frozen bodies to the cryoprisn. They also received Oscars for their work on Bob Zemeckis’ *DEATH BECOMES HER*. It was their work on that film that landed them their berth on *WOLF*.

“We were very eager to work with someone like Mike Nichols,” says Woodruff. “With the kind of work that we do, it was unusual for us to work for someone of his caliber. We admired the body of work he had done, in particular *THE GRADUATE*. Working at our end of the business, whoever would have thought we’d be working on a Mike Nichols film?”

Were they daunted at having to bring him up to speed on the kind of magic they are in the habit of working? “Not for a minute,” says Woodruff. “We view ourselves as director-friendly. We can go to someone like Mike and not feel we



Amalgamated Dynamics provided the convincingly realistic cable-controlled deer that Randall hunts down and kills.

have to educate him on how effects should be shot, edited, or worked into a film. We just like to present the work we do in a manner that can involve anyone easily."

Their first task on the film was to create puppets of the wolf Randall hits with his car at the beginning of the film. It was their idea not to model the wolves precisely on the kinds of timber wolves found in nature. As magical creatures responsible for Nichol's transformation, they required a sense of character not necessarily found in nature. Since these wolves had presumably once been human themselves, the puppet masters decided to work human characteristics into their fuzzy visage. The mix, they believe, was maybe five

percent human and 95 percent wolf. The humanity was reflected mostly in the eyes, which protruded in the human fashion, rather than in the swept-back manner of a real wolf. Real wolves, of course, were used for scenes of running animals; the puppet heads were used for close-ups.

Next up was a cable-controlled deer head and torso, which Nicholson sidles up to and kills during a nocturnal hunt scene that Nichols still gets shivers contemplating. The deer could appear to kick, as well as run and squirm. The plan, recalls Woodruff, was to heap on the blood in increments—there was no sense in pushing Nichols into a gore zone he would not be comfortable entering. Alas, there was no danger of that so long as real animals weren't being

ADI's first task was to create the wolf that bites Randall. The effects team's puppet head suggested a human appearance with its protruding eyes.

maimed and bloodied.

"He loved it," says Woodruff. "It was very simple. It didn't have a lot of movement—it just made its statement and got out."

"Mike never seemed to have a fear of puppets and animatronics," adds Gillis. "It was really great to see that even though the deer had no hind legs, when we showed him a video of it operating, he was almost childlike and misty-eyed. He said we were going to have people walking out of the theater screaming cruelty to animals."

Woodruff and Gillis created puppet heads for the movie's climactic dogfight to give the actor's faces a sense of dynamism and savagery not even Rick Baker's makeup could achieve. Toward this end, they created a series of articulated heads—the jaws had double pivots, allowing the mouths to open especially wide. This came in particularly handy when it came to enabling one of the two characters to wrap their teeth around the other's throat.

The heads were made from a silicone skin material that proved both stretchy and translucent. They had used a similar material in *ALIEN*<sup>3</sup> to make the animatronic Bishop. The problem with silicone was that no one had ever figured out how to paint it properly.

continued on page 62

fun is that as Will's journey progresses, he still tries to keep one foot in his regular life. That will finally become impossible. The collision [with that impossibility] is the fun and exploration of the movie.

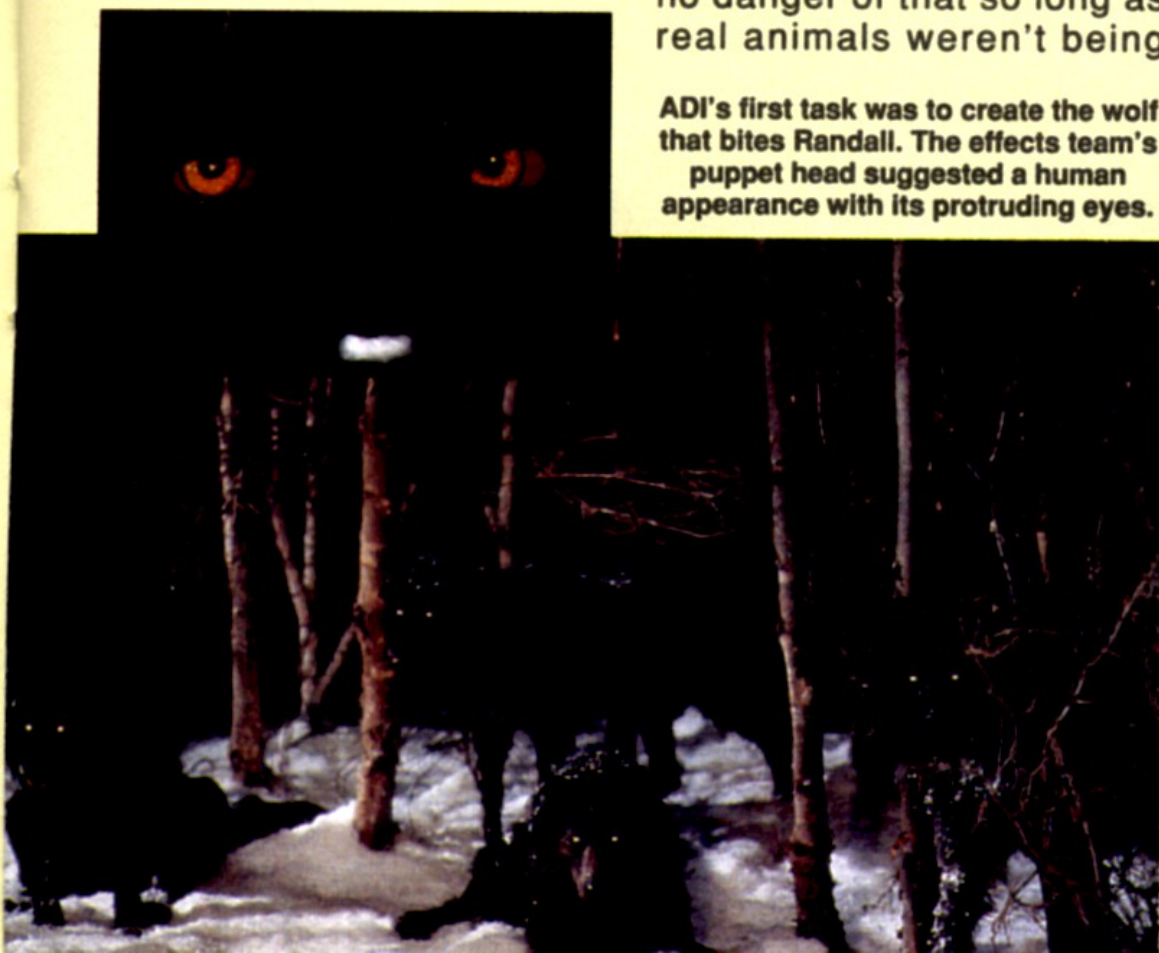
"At first, this sensory stuff helps Will discover his life in a way that is unpleasant. He finds out that his best friend is sleeping with his wife by putting away her dress. After smelling his friend on it, he goes to his apartment and catches his wife there. His enhanced senses help him understand the ways he's out of kilter with his life. And then the good news starts to occur. But as with all the power, it eventually scares him and seems dangerous. That's the basic journey."

"One of the main things that Nicholson and I did work on," recounts Nichols, "was being careful not to state at any point that it's better to be a wolf than a human being. That really drove us both nuts because it's such a Greenpeace, sentimental idea.

"This is an overcivilized, discouraged, middle-aged man who has lost his physical hunting self and has been beaten down by the overhumanized aspects of civilization," adds Nichols. "He's lost the will or the ability to fight. He's passive, he's been betrayed by all

continued on page 26

Before rewrites, Pfeiffer turned down her damsel-in-distress role. "It was just 'the girl,'" she told *Premiere*.



# WOLF

## MAKEUP TRANSFORMATION

*One Oscar-winner replaced another.*

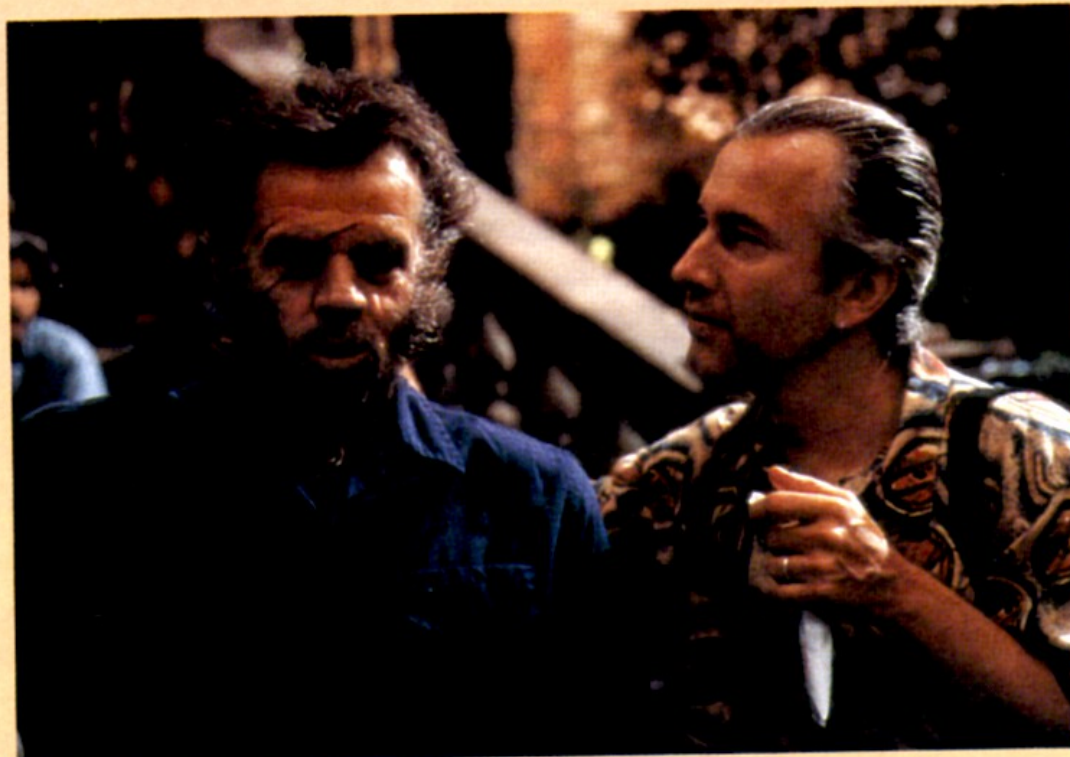
By Sheldon Teitelbaum

Making a werewolf movie with no makeup was the original concept behind WOLF, and, according to producer Doug Wick, it found no greater adherent than Wolfman Jack Nicholson himself. And why not? As a rule, actors hate sitting in the makeup chair for hours at a time. No mere mortal, Nicholson apparently felt he had evolved quite beyond such indignities. At first, he even refused to meet with Rick Baker, who had been brought in to replace Greg (BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA) Cannom, an Oscar-winning makeup artist whose work had not proved quite up to snuff.

Baker had won his own kudos in 1981 for his makeup effects on AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON. But he was told that "nobody sees the Great Oz."

"I wanted desperately to do this," Baker says. Working with

"Heeeerrre's Johnny!" Nicholson's grin and arching eyebrows are ideally suited to bringing Baker's work to life.



On the set, Baker provides a little touch up to Nicholson's canine coiffure.

Nichols, never mind Nicholson, was a great temptation. Baker had been producer Wick's first choice during preproduction, but he had already committed to another project. That endeavor fell through at roughly the same time that Cannom left. Baker wanted in, but if Nicholson didn't understand that both might benefit from a brief schmooze, the production would have to find someone else to lay on the powder. "This was not about pasting a dog's nose on Jack," he told them.

Baker got his audience.

"Jack told me he saw this as the first werewolf movie that wasn't going to use any makeup. I said, 'Well, if anyone can do it, you can do it. And if you can grow hair out of your face on cue, great. If not, though, we're going to have to paste some on you.'"

"The wolfman-without-makeup idea," says Wick, "got jettisoned pretty early. We knew in the third act we were transforming. We knew where we were headed, and we had

to find it. Jack didn't complain. Jack's a filmmaker. When you got to what's necessary to make the story work, it was obvious it had to be done and he agreed."

Nicholson was everybody's first choice for the part of Will Randall largely because no one else in the business looked the part more. A shapeshifter, he can do things with his face that others only achieve with prosthetics. On WOLF, this became especially apparent when James Spader, Nicholson's nemesis, was equipped with the same minimalist makeup as Nicholson. According to Rick Baker, Nicholson looked like a full-fledged wolf. But Spader, whose features are aquiline and finely sculpted, looked like Eddie Munster.

Bringing someone like Baker on to a minimalist makeup shoot like this one doesn't make complete sense at first glance. Certainly that was Baker's own sense when he was asked to join the project.

After reading the script, he concluded that WOLF was no monster movie. "I don't see that it's really a lot about special effects but about performance," he told Wick.

"Yeah, that's totally what we thought," Wick replied.

"So why come to me?" asked Baker.

"Given what we were going for," Wick explains in retrospect, "if each thing weren't done with exquisite taste... You know how, when you see the old [werewolf] movies, you feel there is a mask between you and the actor? We knew that Jack's face was our biggest asset. We just didn't want to hide it. In the third act, he's transforming, but we wanted to do it so that the 'Jackness' could be there."

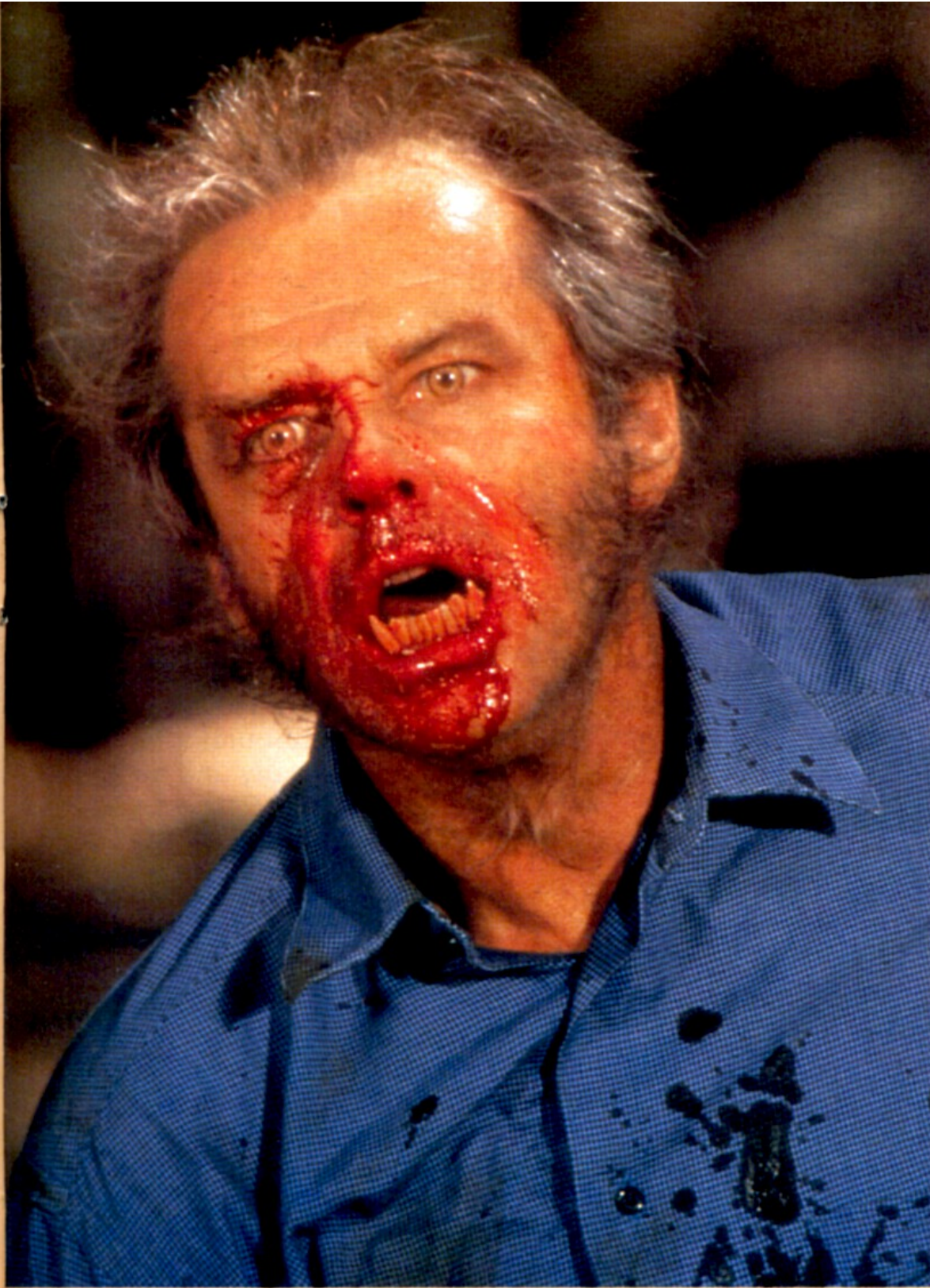
The quest for Jackness had begun with the hiring of Cannom. According to Wick, Cannom did not last out the shoot because of "creative differences." Sources close to the production say that Cannom's take on the werewolf metaphor departed drastically from Wick's, Nichols', or Nicholson's. Allegedly, Cannom regarded the business of becoming a wolf as more of a disease than an alluring prospect. What the filmmakers wanted, however, was to convey some sense of the allure, the animal magnetism, involved in the process.

In fact, Cannom's initial take may not have been entirely at variance with Nichols, who viewed lycanthropy as an echo of AIDS or cancer. Nichols says that the most effective scenes in the film, at least for him, are those in which Nicholson's Will Randall engages in



## WEREWOLF MAKEUP

**“Jack told me this was the first werewolf film that wasn’t going to use makeup,” says Baker. “I said, ‘If you can grow hair on cue, great; otherwise we have to paste it on.’”**



Despite the seductive side of becoming a wolf, director Nichols avoided portraying the loss of humanity in an altogether pleasant light.

denial of his affliction. When hairs begin to grow out of the wound on his hand where he was bitten by a werewolf, the grim-faced Nicholson takes a pair of shears to them and heads off to the office. Later, just before the film’s climactic battle between good wolf and bad wolf, Nicholson insists to Pfeiffer that he will beat his illness.

“It reminds you of so many people you’ve loved who’ve had that response to cancer,” says Nichols. “It breaks your heart.”

According to sources close to the production, Cannom may have been undone by difficulties communicating his sensibility to his producer and director. “His work was great,” says one, “but Jack looked like shit.”

“There were so many problems to be solved,” adds Wick, “and each one could have been a mortal blow to the project. We brought in Rick Baker, and within a shockingly short period of

time, he started to find our version of wolfishness.”

“More than anything,” recalls Baker, “this was about making Jack Nicholson look good and younger than it was about turning him into some kind of beast. I really didn’t see this as a movie where you should stick a lot of rubber on Jack. The trick in this movie is to be subtle. And I said I’d be a good person for that too. I can do subtle stuff.”

Baker did not regard Nichols’ lack of experience in makeup effects as any kind of hindrance. In fact, he says he saw this lack of experience as a distinct advantage.

“I knew that Mike had made a lot of great films, and I felt that was more important. You can work with a director who’s not done any effects, and he can be a not-very-good director. The movie can have great effects and also stink. That’s what excited me about this project—that it would be nice to work in a movie where the film is

good.”

Baker says fans coming with expectations of seeing some of the makeup pyrotechnics of *AMERICAN WEREWOLF* will be disappointed. Fans of interesting moviemaking, however, will not.

“I don’t think people are going to walk out of this movie and say, ‘Wow, that’s the most amazing werewolf stuff I ever saw.’ I think it’s interesting, but not on that scale. I even said this when I met with Mike. I said, ‘Mike, this movie isn’t about a big transformation.’ It would be a mistake to have a big transformation scene in a movie that’s really about performance. What I think is challenging is to use makeup to make Jack’s transformation seem attractive. In that sense, this movie goes back to *THE WEREWOLF OF LONDON*—it’s more human.”

Nichols attributes part of the overall pain he experienced during the making of *WOLF* to the ordeal his actors experienced in the makeup trailer.

“To see their discomfort and pain and despair at the seven hour makeups—Spader had a nine hour makeup one day—we shared their pain. They were sweet and patient and no one ever complained. But you see them go through it: they started shooting at five p.m. Although Spader showed at four a.m. to start his makeup, he wasn’t in shootable condition until 12 hours later.”

Nicholson, in contrast, required only 90 minutes or so in the chair. “Jack’s makeup was really very quick,” says Baker. “Jack’s straight makeup was an hour-and-a-half process. A lot of it was making him look younger. In the course of the film he gets the benefits of the wolf: he becomes more virile; his vision comes back. I basically glued hair on his face. He has very little rubber on his

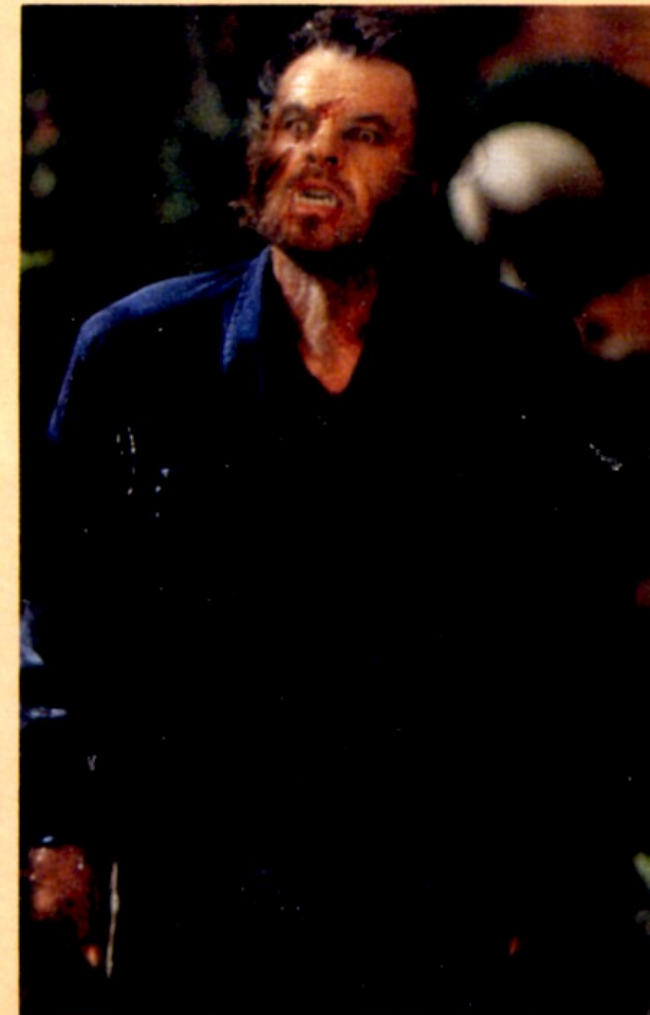
face—I put some ears on him and a little piece in between his eyes, and a little bit of bridge on the nose. Laying hair on the face is almost a lost art now. I really felt that it was a mistake to put a bunch of rubber on his face.”

Did Nicholson complain?

“Initially he was not patient. We had a test day, and he made it pretty clear that he didn’t want to be there. But he dealt with it. And he must have felt it was going in a direction he liked, because after that he became more patient. The more we got into the more wolfed-out stages of the makeup, the more he really liked it. He thought the makeup was terrific.

“I think any actor who has to go through any makeup other than putting some powder on their faces finds it tiresome. Compared to what Lon Chaney had to go through in the old days, it was a piece of cake.” □

Despite the serious dramatic treatment of the material, the film has its monstrous and horrific moments.



around him: in his job, by his best friend, and his wife, to whom he is as faithful as a wolf.

"At first, as his senses sharpen, they enable him to discern various betrayals. Then they enable him to battle the betrayers, to win back his job and, ironically enough, his manhood. The rapacity and the added powers of someone with a superhuman sense of hearing, smell and sight and the sort of lupine aspect makes him Mr. New York. His colleagues think he's Mr. Terrific once he gets lupine and rapacious and begins to fight back and win back his job.

"But, what's happening to Randall is not good news. It just appears to be good news. It gets out of hand, and there's no stopping him. It gets further and further into [his becoming] an animal, and he loses the very things he has been able to fight and win back. He also loses his humanity, which is pretty tough.

"My greatest challenge," adds Nichols, "was to stay in touch with the metaphor, not to let it become a sort of Greenpeace sentimentality. To be a bird is maybe to be free. But it also means having a tiny brain and not being able to appreciate your freedom. We hope we are steering a course that says becoming an animal is a terri-

Director Mike Nichols confers with Michelle Pfeiffer between takes.



## WEREWOLF UNCERTAINTY

**"WOLF was the most difficult movie I have ever worked on," says Nichols, "not least because we kept thinking people will say, 'What are you doing—are you nuts?'"**



Randall, in wolfish form, prepares to pounce on an off-screen victim.

ble thing, and it gets worse and worse and is out of control. But on the other side of it, there may be something that is all right.

Nichols' other worry was "not to let it become a mindless monster movie. I wanted to make it about the *Iron John* nature of being a man at a time and in a place where being a man is not always an easy thing to do."

Nichols' werewolf is clearly a monster for the '90s. Will Randall is a sensitive guy prone to confusion about his male instincts and his own potential from ruthlessness. "I read *Iron John*," says producer Wick, "and there's definitely a sense in this movie of a man exploring resources and depths that he didn't have access to previously. We weren't going for a message in *WOLF*, but when you feel him becoming empowered, it's a journey you want to go on.

"I think women will also find Randall alluring. He's literate; he's responsible. He's distinctively sexual and assertive, but he's never some guy doing a sort of vulgar fuck-me come-

on. He's a wolf, not a pig."

Ironically, Wick says the screenplay never elicited less than raves at any stage of development. "The studio loved the script from the first day," he insists. "Peter Gruber and Mark Canton called and said they loved the script. Jack Nicholson was clearly involved, so they were happy to make the story with Jack and they made it unconditionally."

*Kvelling* (slang for raving) notwithstanding, getting people to sign off on a shooting script proved unusually ardu-

Will Randall confronts his adulterous wife and business partner, played respectively by Kate Nelligan (*DRACULA*) and James Spader (*STARGATE*).



ous. "We've had so many drafts that we went through," sighs Nichols. Wick doesn't think this was to their detriment. "Everyone went in wide-eyed," he says. "There had been so much work on the script, there were all these questions up front—it's not like we rushed. I got to a point on the script where I felt we were in strong shape, and I trust the movie."

**W**OLF was such a difficult movie to make that Nichols eventually came in 10 days late (after years of coming in at least a week early and a million under budget). "There was some enormous pain day to day, and I have no idea why," he says. "We were all in pain.

"The movie," says Nichols, "was incredibly difficult and painful to make. It was forever out of control, and I am a control freak. I couldn't control this fucking thing, because you can't. It's not that it got out of my control, maybe, but that it was taking control of us. Living movies do this. I've always had the experience that a movie tells you what it is and what it wants. It bosses you around at a certain point. This one did a little more violently than they usually do."

Part of the problem may have been that Nichols had never done a movie with even the minimal effects this one had. Mechanical effects specialists Tom Woodruff and Alec Gillis of Amalgamated Dynamics say that Nichols' lack of experience with the exigencies of makeup and mechanical ef-

# WOLF

## WEREWOLF HISTORY

*How Hollywood reinvented the lycanthropic mythology.*

By Steve Biodrowski

After FRANKENSTEIN and DRACULA, the Wolfman ranks third in the pantheon of classic movie monsters. Unlike his brethren, however, he is derived from no literary classic. (One might cite *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as an antecedent, but the werewolf is more a branch of the family than a direct descendant.) Also, although the lycanthrope, like the vampire, has a history in mythology and superstition, little of it remains in the screen incarnation.

European tales of werewolves cast the creatures as voluntary shapeshifters, generally evil witches and sorcerers. The Hollywood werewolf, as everyone knows, is an altogether different creation, a good but hapless mortal inflicted with a curse. This interpretation started in 1935 with THE WEREWOLF OF LONDON. Universal Pictures, after their successful adaptations of Bram Stoker and Mary Shelly, were casting about for other horrific ideas. Apparently taking a cue for their title from the recently published Guy Endore novel *The Werewolf of Paris*, Universal commissioned an original story, despite the fact that Endore was in Hollywood, working on horror scripts such as MARK OF THE VAMPIRE.

John Colton's screenplay bears more than a passing resemblance to Reuben Malmoulian's 1932 adaptation of DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE. For the first and only time, the werewolf is portrayed as a scientist who calls the curse upon himself by going too far in his quest for knowledge. Along these lines, the film invented the notion that a werewolf is a hybrid—"neither man nor wolf" but a "Satanic creature with the worst qualities of both." (Traditional lycanthropes completely took on the shape of

wolves.) Sticking close to this concept, Hull's werewolf is still recognizably human; during his first transformation, he even dons a cap and scarf to disguise himself before going out.

The film also introduced the notion that the change takes place during the full moon and, taking a cue from the vampire, that the affliction is passed through a bite. Unlike the werewolves to follow, this one must kill at least one human victim per transformation or risk remaining permanently afflicted. Again, the implication is that the werewolf retains its intelligence and chooses to kill in order to return to human form.

WEREWOLF OF LONDON failed to implant this version of the creature into the public consciousness, and a sequel was never made. Like the Mummy, Universal's other also-ran in the monster sweepstakes, the character would have to wait until the next decade to be reinvented and launched as a series character under a new studio regime.

Though one tends to think of horror films from the 1930s and 1940s as being equally classic, the later decade was actu-

Chaney was not the first man-wolf hybrid. Henry Hull had played the unfortunate Wilfred Glendon in Universal's 1935 effort THE WEREWOLF OF LONDON.



Lon Chaney Junior, with assists from Curt Siodmak's screenplay and Jack Pierce's makeup, established the popular image of a werewolf in THE WOLFMAN.

ally an era marked mostly by rehashing old material. THE WOLFMAN (1941) seems relatively fresh, because it is not a sequel but a new take on the subject. Curt Siodmak's script retains the full moon and the infective bite from WEREWOLF OF LONDON. On top of this is added the idea that a werewolf is immortal, and the only way to end his curse is with silver. Additionally, the werewolf became a less human, more beastly creature. This makeup by Jack Pierce had been intended for Henry Hull, who declined to have his face completely covered with fur. Lon Chaney Junior was a better sport about the whole thing, with the result that he achieved cinematic immortality in the role.

THE WOLFMAN is a film which became a classic without ever having been a masterpiece. It is riddled with flaws, the most obvious being that the filmmakers seem uncertain whether or not a lycanthrope is a man-wolf hybrid. We are left to ponder why Bela Lugosi (the old generation passing on the curse of type-casting to the next generation?) is replaced by a real wolf, instead of Lugosi in a wolfish make up. Also, Siodmak's poetic speeches ("Even a man who is pure in heart...")



AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON (left) and THE HOWLING (right) improved upon the obligatory werewolf transformation scenes with prosthetic bladder effects.

wear out through repetition.

However, the film has managed to survive because it lays out a mythology which seems like authentic legend, when in fact it is mostly cinematic invention. By casting Chaney's Lawrence Talbot as a working-class stiff, *THE WOLFMAN* breaks *WEREWOLF OF LONDON*'s tenuous connection with Robert Louis Stevenson. Unlike Hull, Chaney is playing a character cursed entirely "through no fault of his own," and his bestial transformation leaves no remnants of his humanity intact.

This transformation perhaps helped the Wolfman distinguish himself from Jekyll and Hyde, allowing him to find his own niche in the public consciousness. The duality of the character is somewhat different: Mr. Hyde, though cunning and evil, was a man, not a beast (even Hull's hapless Wilfred Glendon was a combination of both). Now, instead of a seemingly respectable scientist leading an extremely disreputable double life, the werewolf became a symbol not of Victorian hypocrisy but a more universal one of bestial drives, of hormones causing changes that left the mind incapable of controlling the body. In canine form, Talbot hadn't the cunning to plan a killing with any such goal in mind as regaining his human form; he was simply following an animal instinct.

It's tempting to read Freudian interpretations into this scenario, but little of *THE WOLFMAN* deals with sex on any kind of overt level. For that, audiences would have to wait for Hammer to film their version of the legend. *CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF*, scripted by Anthony Hinds under his John Elder pseudonym, finally brought *The Werewolf of Paris* to the screen, although the setting

was changed to Spain. (A coproduction about the Spanish Civil War had fallen through, and Hammer wanted to use the sets, which had already been built.)

Fusing the established filmic conventions with Endore's tale, *CURSE* manages to be the best cinematic treatment of lycanthropy by placing the simple transformation scenario within a larger Christian cosmology. Oliver Reed's Leon is fated to become a monster not because of a bite but because of a defect of birth, which has allowed a predatory, demonic spirit to enter his body. This canine element is strongest during the full moon, but more important, it is strengthened by whatever weakens the human soul (such as lust and depravity) while held at bay by such ennobling emotions as love.

This schism between Good and Evil, between sex and love, lends a weird sexual kink to the proceedings, rendering the film as a bizarre adult fairy tale. Especially disturbing are the scene of Leon as a boy describing his awakening bloodlust and, later, the scene of a more adult version of that lust being reawakened in a brothel

(he returns a prostitute's kiss with a bite to the shoulder, drawing blood, like a more bestial version of a vampire). The film is also noteworthy for making lycanthropy a more explicit metaphor for puberty: Leon first transforms into a werewolf as a boy, seen howling at the moon with new hair growing on his body.

While other lycanthropy movies would be made over the ensuing years, it was not until the 1980s that the genre would take its next big step forward, with *THE HOWLING* and *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON*. Both are remarkable for using rubber bladder effects to replace the old lapover dissolve technique for the inevitable on-screen transition from man to monster, and they move away from the man-in-make-up approach toward a more animalistic design achieved mechanically. Outside of these technical innovations, the films don't advance the metaphor very far. *AMERICAN WEREWOLF* basically maintains the image of the doomed soul who must die by the closing credits because there is no other way to prevent him from turning into a monster and killing innocent

people. *HOWLING* at least returns to the more traditional concept of a willful shapeshifter, and it replaces the religious/superstitious overtones with psychological ones, as a psychiatrist tries to teach a group of werewolves to tame their animalistic tendencies. For the first time, lycanthropy is portrayed as seductive, but it is still a curse that needs to be repressed. *WOLF* seems intent on loping over similar genre terrain with an eye, like *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*, toward making its monster more attractive. Whether it can do a more sophisticated and successful job than Coppola's overblown romance remains to be seen. □

Hammer's *CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF*, with Oliver Reed, bested Universal's efforts by fusing screen mythology with Endore's novel *The Werewolf of Paris*.



fects never got in his way or slowed him up. If anything, Nichols seemed quite pleased with most of the material he was given, including, on occasion, substandard work [see *Makeup and Mechanical Effects sidebars*] that was eventually replaced or improvised. But, however open to the prospect of doing this kind of movie, there is no doubt that it also complicated the process.

"At first, it all seems relatively simple," Nichols recalls. "People don't have holes in them (*a la* DEATH BECOMES HER). Floors don't rise up. It's all quite straightforward. But there were so many physical/technical elements. You had to restring the goddamn wires and repaste the hair and put the contacts back in.

"I think the effects added a great deal of hardship. A movie, anyway, is putting all these dead pieces together and hoping they'll spring into life. This is taking that process much, much further—it's completely out of your hands. Luckily, we don't have that many effects; when we're through, they will be so woven through and digested you won't be aware of any effects whatsoever, ideally."

**N**ichols also found it psychically challenging to bring the disparate elements of this production together. The experience, he says, provoked widespread discomfort and pain and despair akin, perhaps, to the difficulties he encountered in shooting *CATCH 22*.

"In that production," he recalls, "I made some very serious mistakes, and recognized it as I was shooting it. 'Ah, Christ,' I said, 'This is dead.' But I had to go on. The despair of the [Joseph Heller] book was there, but the vitality—not to mention narrative—wasn't. As a result, it takes forever for anything to happen [in the film] because the wildness and immediacy and vitality—none of those is there. Half of the movie has some life which makes it interesting. But it never had vitality and nuttiness and joy and wildness."

In *WOLF*, Nichols experi-

## WEREWOLF RAPACITY

**"At first, the lupine powers allow him to win back his manhood," says Nichols. "But what is happening is not good; it gets out of hand, and he loses the things he has won back."**



Left to right: producer Doug Wick, writer Jim Harrison, agent Robert Datilla.

enced similar moments of recognition that something was missing. Individual scenes, he says, often did not seem to hang together. Wick sensed this too, but he says he did not succumb to despair.

"I knew in my bones Mike was such a great dramatist that we would find solutions. I felt we had excitement, a great love story, that we'd pay enough dues to the audience's expectations in terms of what we'd deliver in terms of physicality. In my moments of paranoia, that was my checklist, and I always felt we'd deliver well—that it was a very sound enterprise.

"I think Mike pushed and sweat and was beaten up to find solutions, but he always rose to meet the challenge. *THE GRADUATE* was 40 days over [schedule], yet everyone remembers it was an easy shoot. He killed himself on *WOLF* to solve problems. I think Mike kept doing things he'd never done."

And at the end of each pain-wracked day, Nichols recalls, a miracle would take place. His instincts told him his scenes weren't always working. But the dailies proved to

be, in his opinion and that of others involved in the shoot, "the most effective I've ever had.

"They were astonishing," recalls Nichols. "Everyone marveled, partly because of Jack [Nicholson] and Michelle [Pfeiffer], and partly because of Giuseppe Rotunno, the director of photography. He really is the world's greatest cameraman, and he stuns you every time with a discreet beauty and strangeness. He never hits you over the head with anything, but everything's suffused with an oddness and beauty. His instincts are astonishing. He knows much more about a scene than anything you can say in words."

But when he put them all together in the cutting room. Nichols' heart sank. The ultimate werewolf movie, it seemed to him, had become a dog's breakfast. "Oh God," I said, 'it doesn't mean anything,' I said to myself. 'I don't know what it is—it's just the weirdest movie I ever saw.'"

Nearly despairing, Nichols retired to the cutting room. "And a very strange thing happened," he says. "All of the sud-

den there is a kind of groan and shift, where things that haven't worked suddenly begin to work, and scenes you thought maybe didn't have something happen in them fill up because the story and central metaphor have taken it over. They're barreling you through these scenes you've been making piecemeal, and changing them and giving them a power they didn't have one at a time. And the day arrived when it suddenly came to life and began to be something sort of remarkable."

By now, neither Wick nor Nichols could quite trust their instincts as to the kind of movie they had made. They were nervous and edgy and were not sure whether any of it worked. So they arranged a rough screening for friends within Columbia and for their wives. Nichols is married to TV anchorwoman Dianne Sawyer, and trusted her to bring her hard-news sense to bear on the effort.

"They went ape-shit," Nichols says. "And we began to see it through the eyes of someone watching the story develop. And it picked us up by the scruff of the neck and began to control us."

It is his fervent hope, of course, that *WOLF* will have that same effect upon audiences. □

Before his predatory instinct kicks in, Randall seems likely to get axed by new boss (Christopher Plummer).



# RAVER

By Sue Uram

Walter Koenig—the Freud of the Final Frontier? The classic TREK actor, usually piloting the *Starship Enterprise* through the vastness of outer space, is boldly going “where no man has gone before”—into the murky inner space of the mind of Norman Walters, a normal but slightly schizophrenic young man.

“These things sort of determine their own venue,” says Koenig. While driving along one day, Koenig had a flash of brilliance which he felt would lend itself favorably to the comic book level of literature. Admittedly, he stopped reading comics as a child of 12 years, but he remained interested in the genre. “When I am feeling anxious or the real world has been pressing and angst ridden, I retreat into this hobby. I thought it would be nice if I could combine this hobby with this creative urge I had,” he explains.

Although the title *Raver* was not his first choice, Malibu comics nicely informed him that his original title of *No-Mad* was already taken. “I submitted a list of 20 alternate titles for the comic once Malibu agreed to go ahead with my idea. I let them choose,” he says. The title was meant to reflect either the mental state of the main character or the fact that he journeys from world to world.

Koenig's superhero is indeed a far cry from the normal comic hero. Norman, an ordinary man who lives in Grinnell, Iowa, has been gifted by an “other world” entity with the ability to create new worlds within his mind. This entity, realizing that overcrowding has occurred in the Universe, is attempting to compensate by creating a Utopian world within Norman's mind. Unfortunately, “Norman does not fight back,” explains Koenig. “He simply retreats into that world which he creates within his mind to deal with the situation of conflict.” When this happens, in moments of stress, his unconscious creates nightmare worlds filled with peril. So the creation of a Utopian society is never accomplished—at least not in the initial three comics commissioned

## Walter Koenig's Comic Book Hero of the Inner Mind.



The title character of Walter Koenig's *Raver*, a superhero who must right wrongs in alternate worlds created by the mind of his alter ego.

from Koenig. “Norman enters these worlds as an alter-ego named Raver. It is Raver's responsibility to put right whatever wrong that Norman has created,” he explains. “Unless Raver completes this mission, Norman cannot resume his life.”

Although the action in *Raver* world takes place in a split second of real time so that no one else is aware that Norman has even left the vicinity, should Raver not accomplish his deed, Norman would not survive in this world. Psychologically

speaking, Norman would probably retreat into an autistic state. “Raver's powers change from world to world and from situation to situation so that his superpowers only mirror that of his adversary,” he says. If the adversary is a telepath, then Raver is a telepath. It is up to Raver to determine the special power of his adversary and use that power to combat him.

“The graphics being done by Dan and Dave Day are quite excellent,” comments Koenig, hastening to add that writing for comics is much more complex than writing book text. “With each frame of comic panels they send to me, I have to be certain that I describe every character, their position, their emotional state, etc., so that it is true to my conception,” he explains. “I do not want Raver to be square-jawed and grim. I would like the depiction of Norman to reflect his emotions as the reluctant superhero. It is his duty and his calling, but I think he should feel apprehensive, fearful, sardonic, wry or sarcastic. I don't say this is an easy task, but I hope to see more of it as we go along. There are many things I do not picture that they throw in,” he adds. “They can draw the panel any size, without panel lines, almost any way to make it effective rather than the usual way I was used to seeing them as in a rectangular shape. My main concern is that, however it is rendered, the visceral thrust will be there.” Targeting several levels of age groups, Koenig cites spectacular graphics which would appeal to the

younger crowd but hastens to add that each comic is a little morality play. “There is some intellectual material here which should be digested as well,” he feels. “I am not writing down to anyone as a means of communication. I have to maintain a certain amount of integrity, or my work would be without purpose.”

Usually Norman addresses the human condition in one way or another. “Better a society in anarchy than one in conformity—with conformity comes the total stifling

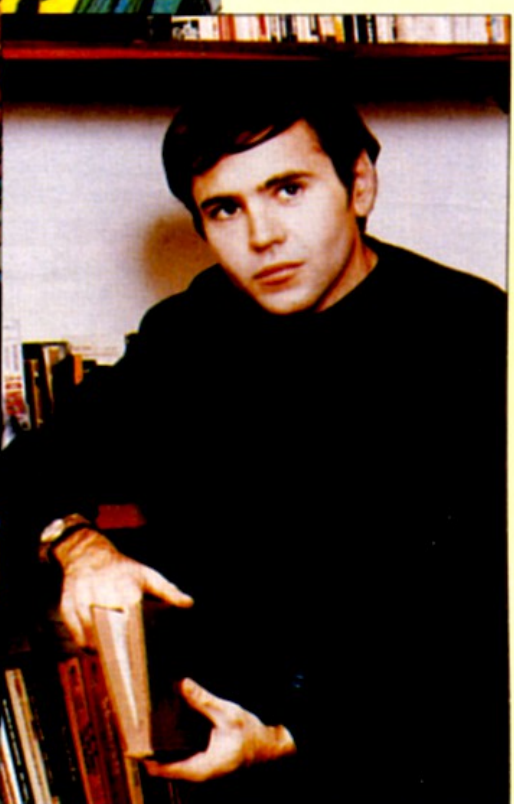
REAL WORLDS, IMPERFECT WORLDS OF SUFFERING AND EVIL WHICH, AS THE SUPERHERO, HE MUST RESCUE. IF HE IS EVER TO RETURN TO IOWA AND ABIGAIL."



**“My main concern is the visceral thrust, but there is some intellectual material as well. I am not writing down to anyone.”**  
**—Creator Walter Koenig—**

am in touch with the people who might translate this for me,” he says. “In a comic format, my imagination can go absolutely wild because there are no rules other than the ones that I have stipulated for Norman and Raver. In the second story, Raver finds himself in a world which is itself a living organism; in the third installment, Raver is in a world of nursery rhymes and storybook tales where he regresses into a childhood state. It can be anything I choose for it to be, because Norman’s mind can create anything. Therefore, you can violate any of the structures of reality that you want. These storylines are the product of a mind in disorientation.

“I am hoping that, if we go beyond the first three issues, I would like to just oversee the series and have someone else write the stories,” he adds. “These things I have spelled out would have to remain part of the storyline. I would encourage



them to go as far out as they could with the idea.” Koenig does not plan to make a guest appearance in his comics at this point but maintains that “anything is possible.” Fans of Koenig should look for “...a lot of imagination, a novel approach of storytelling, and a wry sense of humor: Raver is articulate—he even quotes Shakespeare!” But, on the whole, Norman is an average guy, in his early '30s, who is a working guy with a girlfriend named Abigale and with an adversary in this world named Murphy

Above: Instead of confronting unpleasant situations, mild-mannered Norman Walters retreats into worlds created within his own mind. Right: creator Walter Koenig.

of individuals. The society has a vacuous existence. With anarchy comes chaos to be sure,” he comments. “But these people are alive, thinking and functioning, and have hope that something can be resolved. In a society with conformity, you have a situation where all hope is gone. That’s the first issue.” The second issue deals with the fact that people require encouragement from their fellow human beings to function and exist and that the lack of faith of others in you can only lead to self-destruction.

“People must be supportive of others,” he says. “These topics have been around for a long time, and I have mulled them over in my head. It was just a question of which issues would be important and would lend themselves to be theatrical and dramatic.”

Koenig feels that this comic could readily transform itself into a television series and has assured his rights through multiple patents on *Raver*. “As a live show, it would be incredibly expensive, I think. I have been offered an animated series and

Wilcoxin. “Characters in his real world often appear in his nightmare world. Sometimes they are distorted to represent what it is about them which bothers Norman so that he can resolve this issue,” he says. “But Raver has his own set of values so that Norman never resolves any of his conflicts. Norman is shy and timid and articulate. Raver is the exact opposite as the superhero alter ego.” STAR TREK fans beware—this is definitely not the Neutral Zone! □



Beswicke played a serial killer in **FROM A WHISPER TO A SCREAM** and the "Queen of Evil" in Oliver Stone's debut, **SEIZURE** (Inset).





# QUEEN OF EVIL

## MARTINE BESWICKE

**Whether playing evil vamps or Amazon queens, the actress is good at being bad.**

*By Steve Biodrowski*

Martine Beswicke is one of the most striking actresses to have emerged from the genre in the 1960s. Unlike the majority of her contemporaries, who were usually cast as young ingenues, Beswicke showed considerable flair for screen villainy in her two starring roles for Hammer Films: *PREHISTORIC WOMEN* (a.k.a. *SLAVE GIRLS*) and *DR. JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE*—performances that make one wish the company had exploited her talents better and more often.

Part of her appeal is no doubt due to her femme fatale attractiveness, but more than mere looks, she brings an enthusiasm to her roles. Barbara Steele, whom she somewhat resembles, may blanch at being dubbed the Queen of Horror and insist that *BLACK SUNDAY*'s effectiveness is due entirely to Mario Bava's cinematic vision, rather than any interesting acting challenge; Beswicke, on the other hand, enjoys the opportunity to explore what she terms her "dark side" on screen in such roles as the Queen of Evil in Oliver Stone's 1974 directorial debut, *SEIZURE*.

Born in Jamaica, 1941, Beswicke came to England in



"First of all, the way I look," replies Beswicke when asked to explain her evil allure. "There is a part of me that is definitely not of this world."

1953, where she studied acting. In 1963, she landed her first film role, *SATURDAY NIGHT OUT*. She then appeared in two James Bond films, *FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE* and *THUNDERBALL*, which brought her to the attention of Hammer executive Michael Carreras, who cast her in *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* After her work at Hammer and a stint of making films in Italy, she moved to the United States, where she began appearing in films and television shows such as *BARETTA*, *THE FALL GUY*, *SLEDGEHAMMER*, and *MELVIN AND HOWARD*.

She continues to work in the genre, having recently appeared in the direct-to-video items *EVIL SPIRIT* and *TRANCERS II*. Though typecasting has often forced her into roles that do scant justice to her talent, she is nonetheless proud of her genre association and eagerly discusses her horror films: whereas Steele has scant recollection of appearing in the directorial debuts of David Cronenberg, Jonathan Demme, and Joe Dante, Beswicke enthusiastically recalls working with Oliver Stone. However, she acknowledges that the horror genre hasn't given her the recognition she



In 1967's *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* (inset), Beswicke fought Raquel Welch. Later that year, *PREHISTORIC WOMEN* promoted her to an Amazon queen.

good for me, because I could get out on my own at 16."

After graduation, Beswicke returned to Jamaica, where the limited acting possibilities led her into modeling. Eventually, a small film for the Jamaican tourist board attracted the attention of an English talent agency. At their invitation, she returned to England in 1961, where she was put up for DR. NO. "I was up for Honey [the part played by Ursula Andress], but I really didn't have the experience," she admits. "Then [director] Terence Young wanted me for the Oriental assassin, but I was too young for it."



Beswicke returned to modeling, also doing bit parts on television, before finally making her feature debut in *SATURDAY NIGHT OUT*. Fortunately, she had made a memorable impression on Young, who cast her in *FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE* (1962) as a fighting gypsy girl. "It was a wonderful fight scene," she recalls. "We rehearsed for three

weeks to get that down; then we had to shoot it in a week. It was a real workout. We had to choreograph the whole thing, which was filmed hand-held, with the camera in close."

Although the original plan was to film on location, the sequence ended up staged on the backlot at Pinewood. "We were supposed to go to Turkey—which is just as well we didn't," she acknowledges. "I always say that if I went to Turkey, they'd arrest me and I'd never get out of jail, given how women are supposed to behave—ha!"

Though her role was small, Beswicke managed to convey a certain fierceness, which helped her land a larger part two years later in *THUNDERBALL*—one of the few times an actress had been called to reappear in the Bond series. "They did not want to use me again, because they never like to use the same woman twice—they like new meat," she laughs. "But they needed an island girl. I went down to Nassau, and part of my job was to go out on location and get tanned, because I was absolutely white from being in England."

Working on the Bond series was a prestigious experience. "The Bond films were very big for their time," she recalls. "As the characters lived—the best champagne, caviar, and everything—so did we. And everyone wanted us around, because 'Bond' was the magic word. When we weren't work-

Before Hammer Horror, Beswicke began her career as a Bond girl, seen here in her second outing with Sean Connery, the 1965 effort *THUNDERBALL*.

deserves; for this reason she would prefer to work more in television, which has given her the opportunity to broaden into comedy, as with her guest stint opposite Dabney Coleman in the short-lived *BUFFALO BILL* sitcom.

"I wanted to be an actress since I was four years old, and I didn't even know what that meant," she recalls today. "Funnily enough, when I was younger, I would run away crying every time they pointed a camera at me—it was like I didn't want to face my destiny. Then, after a couple of years, I started to recognize the camera"—she laughs—"so I came up with this idea, and I started to put on shows in the backyard. I really had a wonderful childhood in Jamaica. I grew

up in a great estate with my grandfather. We had wonderful space, so we could act, dance, sing, and put on plays."

**A**t the age of 12, Beswicke was sent by her mother to a school in England. "She wanted me to learn the Queen's English, instead of speaking in my lovely Jamaican patois," the actress jokes. "I immediately joined the dramatic department. Then I discovered a private school which put on shows once a month in Richmond Theatre. My mother realized I was not interested in anything else—school suffered dreadfully—so we came to a compromise: I went to secretarial college for a couple of years, which was



**“When I read the script [for SEIZURE], I saw genius in this man [Oliver Stone]. There is a madness in him, which I liked. He is intense and passionate.”**

ing on the film, we were doing major publicity. All the magazines came down and did massive spreads. It was hectic, but it was wonderful. It was a great group of people, who all liked to play and party. We had a ball: a lot of laughs, and dramas, and romances. It was one of the most incredible experiences I ever had.”

Her work in the two Bond films led to a supporting role in *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* (1967). She had another fight scene, this time with Raquel Welch. “That’s one of those stories,” says Beswicke. “Both of us love to dance; we’re great dancers. They had two doubles for us, and when the doubles began to fight, we just looked at each other without saying a word, knowing that we had to do it ourselves. And we did. I was really glad, because we came up with a pretty good fight. After two fight scenes, they called me ‘Battling Beswicke’ for a couple of years. I even fought in the next film, *PREHISTORIC WOMEN*.”

Acting in *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.*, a film without any real dialogue and only a few made-up words to suggest

some primitive language, was a considerable challenge, but according to Beswicke, a more amusing challenge was fighting dinosaurs that weren’t there. “We were on the ground stabbing, and Ray Harryhausen was in a truck showing us what to do, because he had to fill it in afterward,” she recollects. “We had to just let go and use our imagination.”

Next, the actress graduated to her first lead role in *PREHISTORIC WOMEN*, a lost-world adventure in which she plays the queen of an Amazon tribe. With bemused sarcasm, Beswicke refers to the rather campy production as “one of the greatest movies ever made,” adding, “We realized what we had, basically. The original title was *SLAVES OF THE WHITE RHINO*—this tribe was enslaved by and worshipping this rhino. So, right away you knew there were going to be a lot of phallic symbols. I did it absolutely seriously, but I had a lot of fun in between takes. We worked very hard, but we knew what was going on. It was shot on the redressed sets of *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.*, and I was in the

Beswicke’s first Bond appearance was as a gypsy in *FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE* (1964). Such fight scenes earned her the title, “Battling Beswicke.”



During her stint in Italy, Beswicke filmed *IL BACIO* (“The Kiss”), which cast her as an extremely exotic dancer. The film never made it to these shores.

leather bikini again, though a little more dressy because I was the queen—with goatskin rugs all over me. It was my biggest part so far, so I took the ball and ran with it—or took the whip and ran with it! Let’s face it, I’m out there anyway, so this was perfect for me!”

Acting the role to the hilt was encouraged by the film’s amusing premise of a society of women who dominate men. “Not only that, but with the blondes subservient to the brunettes,” she adds. “That was fun, because all the blondes were these drama school waifs with little voices, and the dark ones were these macho Amazons. Here we are in this lost civilization, and we all have British accents!”

After Hammer came a couple of films in Italy, including *A BULLET FOR THE GENERAL* (1967, Domiano Damiani) with Gian Maria Volante and Klaus Kinski. “I spent three months in Amarillo on a horse, doing all my own stunts,” she exclaims. “I had told them I could ride, which was the usual: if you

really want the job, you lie about it and then learn. John Richardson [her co-star from *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.*], who I was with at the time, was also about to do a Western in Spain, and neither of us could ride. So, off we went with a teacher every day until we were so sore we could hardly walk.”

1967 was also the year of the little-seen English thriller directed by Peter Collinson: *PENTHOUSE*, with Suzy Kendall. “It was a very nasty allegory on life,” she explains. “There were only five characters: this young couple is terrorized by Tom, Dick and Harry—and I’m Harry. It was a good part of me, because it really was working as an actress. I walked on the set on the first day and said to Peter, ‘My God, I don’t know how I’m going to do this.’ It was a page of dialogue which went from one extreme to the other. He made me do it—he totally believed in me. I was scared to death, but it came off well. It was a really good experience





Unlike Barbara Steele and other actors and actresses who feel typecast, Beswicke embraces her sinister image and enjoys working in the genre.

in terms of discovering myself as an actress, as opposed to a pin-up. You weren't quite sure about her. At moments she'd go off, and then she'd be back again."

After several years in the U.S., working mostly in television, Beswicke returned to England to star in *DR. JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE* (1972). One of her better efforts, the film featured an intriguing premise, great production values, and stylish direction

(courtesy of Roy Ward Baker). Unfortunately, the unfocused screenplay by Brian Clemens meanders in its attempt to include every possible cliché of Victorian horror: not only do we get Robert Louis Stevenson, but bits of *DORIAN GREY*, *Burke and Hare*, and even *Jack the Ripper*.

"It was a very interesting premise, because it's about the male and female in each of us, and I was going for it totally," she explains. "It wasn't

**“The reason I don’t work as often as I should is that I have a unique personality and look. I have lived in so many cultures there is an oddity about me.”**

about the dark and light so much—that had already been done in *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*—it was about male and female. I was serious about what I was doing. Unfortunately, there were so many areas we didn't explore. We had a really good opportunity there, but instead of exploring, they exploited. There were moments when we explored it, but there should have been more."

The weaknesses in the story were somewhat mitigated by the performances of Beswicke and her co-star, the late Ralph Bates. Although, for obvious reasons, the two never appeared on-screen together, they did collaborate closely on the characterization. "In fact, we were really good friends," claims the actress. "It was interesting: we didn't really look alike if you saw us separately, but we began—because we were in the same costume at times and because we had our hair done the same way—to look alike. Sometimes people would come up from behind and say, 'Martine' to Ralph. We had a good relationship; we worked well together—or apart, actually."

The role required some nudity, in particular the scene wherein *Jekyll* first awakens inside the body of a woman. "That was an interesting scene to do," Beswicke states. "For me, the nudity was very important at that point: having been born with this body, and never having known myself, I'm realizing the power I have over a man—and learning to use it."

Beswicke is not particularly dismayed that the filmmakers chose to portray the emerging feminine side in evil terms; in fact, she believes there's a certain amount of male paranoia when it comes to acknowledging a feminine side. "Women are at least having to come to terms with their male

side, which is, I think, what the Women's Movement was all about, really. Not just equal pay, not just equal opportunity—but taking a stance and truly coming to terms with that side. Now we're in an imbalance, because males have not come to terms with their feminine side yet."

With Hammer in its death throes and little else happening in England during that period, Beswicke made a couple of films in Italy. "One was *IL BACIO*, a melodrama where I was the evilest of all. I was this exotic dancer who took drugs and did black masses. The director was an opera director making his first film, so they had beautiful costumes and photography."

The film provided an opportunity to work with the talented Valentina Cortese, who made a memorable impression as the Queen of the Moon in Terry Gilliam's *ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN*. "We had a lesbian scene together," Beswicke relates. "We walked on the set when we had to do this nude scene, and she said, 'Martine, I must talk to you!' So we had this fabulous lunch around the corner. Then she said, 'If we are to do this, a kiss

Hammer cast Beswicke and Bates in *DR. JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE*.



on the lips is not going to work; we have to do it for real.' I said, 'Say no more. We're in agreement.' So we finished lunch, came back to the set, and did wonderful scenes—really got into it. We had no problem with that."

Much to her regret, the film was never released outside Italy; in fact, she never saw it until a friend obtained a video-copy taped from an Italian TV station. "I often looked longingly at the poster and thought I'd love to have a copy. It didn't work, because they had two leads who weren't actors—they were pretty nudes. It's a shame because I felt good about my work in that one. I got mad in the end, which was interesting, because we're all a little mad anyway. We've all come pretty close, but not jumped over the edge. So, in order to do it, you really have to get into another level of consciousness, and I went all out."

While in Rome, Beswicke received a call from Oliver Stone, who had seen DR. JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE and wanted her to play the title role in his directorial debut, which was to be based on his own screenplay, QUEEN OF EVIL. The finished film, which quickly disappeared from theatres and from the director's official filmography, was called SEIZURE. "I'm sorry they didn't keep the original title," says Beswicke. "QUEEN OF EVIL had a little pizzazz to it; SEIZURE had nothing. What the hell did it mean?"

Beswicke's character was

"We began to look alike, because we were in the same costume and hair."



based on the Hindu goddess Kali, the giver and taker of life. The story featured her and her compatriots haunting the life and dreams of a writer who has used them as characters in his work. "When I read the script, I saw such a genius in this man," claims Beswicke. "There is a madness in him, which I liked. Working with him was an incredible experience. He is intense and passionate. I like working with people like that. If you have some namby-pamby person, it doesn't come off. It was a very small film with no money. We cut corners. All of us were working for scale, and we were living in the house where we were shooting. We'd go to bed and wake up with equipment all around us. All of us were pitching in—we'd clean house, etc. We'd go outside to film and the cameras would freeze because it was so cold. It was hard. We worked very long hours. It was a terrific cast: Mary Woronov, Christina Pickles, Jonathan Frid. I've done several small films with terrific casts. For me, it makes the film work; unfortunately, they've not been huge successes."

**S**ince then, Beswicke has remained in America, where she continues to appear in film and television. She made a cameo appearance as the leader of a cult in the TV-movie DEVIL DOG: HOUND OF HELL. Though the role was small and the script weak, there was some compensation in working for director Curtis Harrington (NIGHT TIDE, GAMES). "It was wonderful to work with Curtis," she attests. "He and I have known each other, and I'd always admired his work. When we got on the set, and I had this mumbo-jumbo to say, I asked him, 'How are we going to do this?' In fact, what we did was work together and give each other ideas in terms of how we wanted to shoot it and what I could give him. Even though it was a small part, we were creative together. I just wish the whole film was like that."

Among her many television roles, Beswicke appeared twice as the guest villain on



Since coming to America, Beswicke has appeared in a variety of TV shows, including SLEDGEHAMMER, BUFFALO BILL and (above) THE FALL GUY.

COVER UP—her role was being set up as a recurring character when the series was canceled. Also, she appeared in an episode of BUFFALO BILL: Dabney Coleman's obnoxious talk show host got involved with a movie star from Brazil, who, much to his surprise, turned out to be a transsexual who hadn't had the final operation. "I loved working with Dabney," she recollects. "The network Standards and Practices people didn't want us to kiss, be-

cause I was playing a man. We said, 'Don't be ridiculous—this is a woman playing the part.' They said, 'Yes, but it's not right.' But we got away with it.

"I realized that's what I'd really like to do, a sitcom. But something a little different—I can't do an ordinary sitcom. I love working. I really enjoy working with a group of people. That's part of what film is about: you form an immediate relationship, because you're so raw you've got to expose



During *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.*, Beswicke's appearance with John Richardson (Barbara Steele's *BLACK SUNDAY* co-star) led to an off-screen romance.

**“I would like to play an older vamp, because we do exist, I’m here to tell you; I’m living proof. I love to play wicked ladies who are mischievous and vital.”**

your emotions so that you’re completely open instantly. You’re instant best friends, instant lovers, instant enemies, instant whatever it is. It’s a very exciting process. Passionate. Anything I’m involved in is going to be passionate.”

Many of her recent genre credits have not, unfortunately, done her justice. Along with Martin Landau, Robert Quarry, and Jeffrey Combs, she appeared in Fred Olen Ray’s low-budget *CYCLONE*, which she terms her “least favorite film.” She followed that with *FROM A WHISPER TO A SCREAM* for first-time director Jeff Burr. “Jeff was adorable to work

with—very enthusiastic. So is Fred Olen Ray—I like Fred. But that was a little part. They needed more space to make it work, in terms of my performance. Some of the things I’ve done have been unsatisfactory. I come away feeling, ‘I didn’t get to do what it needed.’ In any case, whatever film you come away from, you go into the dumps, especially if you’ve been on it for a long time, because it’s like cutting a cord.”

In *EVIL SPIRITS*, she was among several familiar faces Karen Black, Virginia Mayo, Arty Johnson, and Quarry, again wasted by Gary Graver (Fred Olen Ray’s cinematogra-

pher, making one of his occasional directing efforts). “I must say, it’s such a bad movie,” she laments, adding that she felt miscast as the gypsy fortune teller dispatched by an unexplained looney lurking in the basement. “At the time, I said, ‘This is really too much. You’re going to have me eaten by a cannibal? I mean, what is this guy doing in the cellar?’ Gary said, ‘Don’t worry about it. Just do it.’ It really was going a bit too far, but that was how the film was set up. It actually was fun working on it, but I was wrong for the role. I kept telling him, ‘I’m not right. If you’re going to use me, I should have a wig and be a really wild character.’ But he kept on saying, ‘No, no, no—we want you as you are.’”

Although released previously, *TRANCERS II* was filmed after *EVIL SPIRITS*. The script was inferior to Charles Band’s original minor cult hit, but Beswicke enjoyed working with Jeffrey Combs, who played her accomplice in evil. “We were the Evil A-Team,” she laughs. “It was really funny, because we had to be the Terrible Twins, so we would stride constantly, and every once in awhile they would move the camera so fast that we would end up run-

ning instead of walking after it. A complete farce! I would end up having hysterics.” However, she doesn’t quite see the similarity that Bruce G. Hallenbeck pointed out between Combs and Ralph Bates in *IM 1:3:26*. “Only in that he’s probably really quiet, but not really—because Ralph was naughty.”

Producer Jonathan Demme, who had used Beswicke for a small part in his 1980 directorial effort *MELVIN AND HOWARD*, gave her a cameo in *MIAMI BLUES*, written and directed by George Armitage. “We’re old friends; in fact, his wife and I met on *THUNDERBALL*,” she explains. “They wanted me to come down and hang out with them and do this cameo.” She appears as a waitress who is noticeably unimpressed with Alec Baldwin’s demeanor during a lunch with Jennifer Jason Leigh, giving the impression that there was more interaction left on the cutting room floor. “Well there was more, but it was basically their scene, so they didn’t really need more of me.”

Most recently, she played a strong supporting character role in last year’s *WIDE SARGASSO SEA* for director John Duigan (*SIRENS*). “That was very different,” she says proudly of the effort, which is basically a prequel to *JANE EYRE*, giving the backstory of Rochester’s mad wife. “A friend of mine who knew [producer] Janet Shaw asked me if I knew the book *Wide Sargasso Sea*. I said, ‘Of course, it’s my favorite. I’ve been up for it; 25 years ago, I met Michael Apted to play the lead. So many people have tried to make it, but it’s never been done.’ When it looked like it was finally going to get made, I met Janet, and we became close friends. I just kept on saying, ‘I have to be in this movie, though I don’t know if I

As Sister Hyde, Beswicke utilizes her seductive charms to lure an unsuspecting victim (Gerald Sim) to his death.



can play the part. I felt the age group wasn't right, so they got Rachel Ward to play the mother, and then I was the aunt."

Unfortunately, Beswicke's strong presence in the early section disappears during the middle of the NC-17 film. "We did have a couple of other scenes, but due to the bodice-ripping, I got shoved in the background. But it was amazing to play that character. They said I was too young and they would have to make me older, so I tried on this grey wig, and this regal old lady emerged."

Despite this, Beswicke doesn't see herself abandoning horror for character roles; in fact, she would love to appear in an adaptation of Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, as perhaps Gabriela in *The Vampire Lestat* or Maharet in *Queen of the Damned*. "I love her books; I cannot put them down. My God, she writes brilliantly! Such imagination—where does it come from? And nobody's ever done a vampire movie right. The closest was the first one with Christopher Lee, and the one with Frank Langella was very sensuous, but still it did not touch on the depth of sensuality involved in these characters, and Anne Rice does. I understand it—I really do. So much so that every Halloween I get dressed up as a vampire and really get into it. It takes six hours to get ready, and nobody better come near, be-



If we accept James M. Cain's dictum that "True beauty has *terror* in it," then there can be no question that horror star Martine Beswicke qualifies as a true beauty.

cause I'm going to bite them! I'd love to play a vampire, but I couldn't in one of those ridiculous films like *THE LOST BOYS*. Please! That was not about sensuality; it was about a gang of hoodlums. I want to do something really classic. I want to get into the minds and hearts of

these dead souls."

**B**eswicke attributes her long association with dark and sinister characters "first of all, to the way I look—I'm not your normal type. Maybe my masculine side shows up a bit more. Also, my background—there's a lot of superstition when you grow up in a country like Jamaica. There's a part of me that is definitely not of this world—I think that's what people see. It makes it difficult, because nobody can slot me. I mean, they can slot me for a while into 'evil and dark,' but when there are no more 'evil and dark' characters, where are they going to put me? For me, I see it quite clearly: stick me in comedy!"

Still, she would enjoy maintaining her dark image, if she could find the right characters to play. "Actually, I'm up for a couple of things right now which

could be very interesting," she reveals. "I mean, I would like to play an older vamp, because we do exist, I'm here to tell you; I'm the living proof of that. I think there is room for that kind of wicked lady. In fact, I was talking to a producer the other day, discussing an idea for a film we might be putting together, and I said, 'You know, one of the things that made me lose interest is that the roles I loved to play had several dimensions to them—not just plain evil.' There is a sardonic enjoyment—mischievous, curious, vital—and many sides to these characters. And it's hard to find that. There are few opportunities like that for me; usually they're out-and-out bitches. I know the reason I don't work as often as I should is that I have a unique personality and look. I've lived in so many cultures that there is an oddity about me. I also come from being a pin-up beauty, so what do you do with me now that I'm getting older? Luckily my agent believes that when the part comes up, nobody else will be able to play it—I'll be the only one. I like that, because the thing that keeps me from work is the very thing that will pop me to the top." □

Beswicke played a gun-toting government agent in Fred Olen Ray's *CYCLONE*, her "least favorite film."



Beswicke poses with Susan Tyrrell, Clu Gulager, and Vincent Price on the set of *FROM A WHISPER TO A SCREAM*, which wasted her in a brief cameo.



# SPACE RACE

## Dynamic Motion Simulation Theatre from Showscan.

By David Ian Salter

*I've always been fascinated with the way large-format films totally immerse the audience in a different reality. At Showscan, we created the first simulator ride, finally allowing the audience to be participants in the movie. Using IMAX technology, we refined the movie ride in 1990 with the popular "Back to the Future" attraction at Universal Studios Florida and Hollywood. At Luxor Las Vegas, we took the concept even further, creating an immersive entertainment experience that involved the audience in a trilogy of dramatic films in different formats. And now, through my new relationship with IMAX, we're planning the ultimate in breakthrough technologies and attractions, including large-format films, 3-D sound and images, and high-impact*

*simulator rides.*

*—Douglas Trumbull  
as quoted in Daily Variety*

Futurists have been proclaiming the approach of virtual reality for some time now, but there are those who would say that it has already arrived, albeit in a fetal state, with the opening of "Star Tours" at Disneyland in 1987. The success of this ride, which combines film with a hydraulic system that moves the audience in synchronization with the on-screen images, led other major theme parks to create their own motion simulators. Visitors to Disney World can take an Asimovian fantastic voyage through the human body in "Body Wars," while the nearby Universal Studios Florida has two time travel simulations, one based on BACK TO THE FUTURE and the other on

Hanna Barbera's THE FLINT-STONES and THE JETSONS.

Now, the Los Angeles-based Showscan Corporation has entered the simulator field with "Space Race." For Showscan, the ride represents an attempt to recapture a share of the market they claim to have created when they installed the first of what they call Dynamic Motion Simulators in 1984 at the base of the world's tallest free-standing building, the CN Tower in Toronto, Canada. Unlike subsequent theme park simulators, which add to the illusion of the worlds they create by having riders pass through anterooms that are made up to look like space stations, complete with attendants in appropriate uniforms, that first Showscan simulator, which is still in operation, is simply an unadorned movie theatre on



At the starting gate (above) viewers find their uneventful tour of the spaceport has led them into a combination high-speed race & demolition derby.

hydraulics. The CN Tower simulator opened with a film called TOUR OF THE UNIVERSE, which some contend to have been the original inspiration for Disney's "Star Tours."

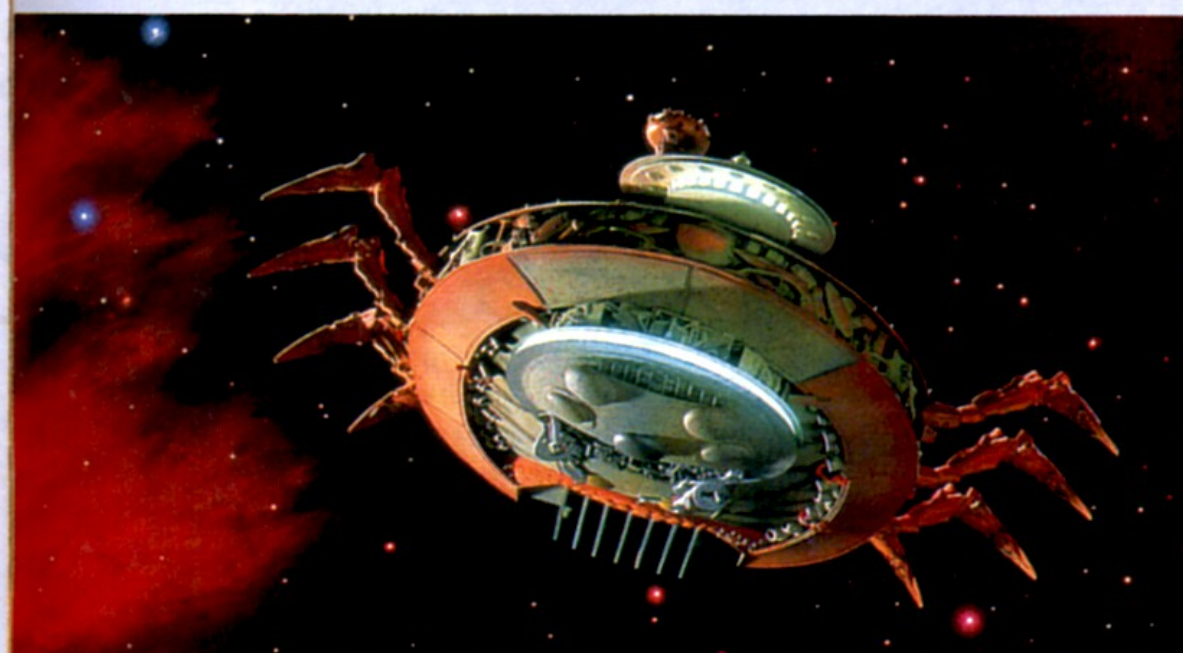
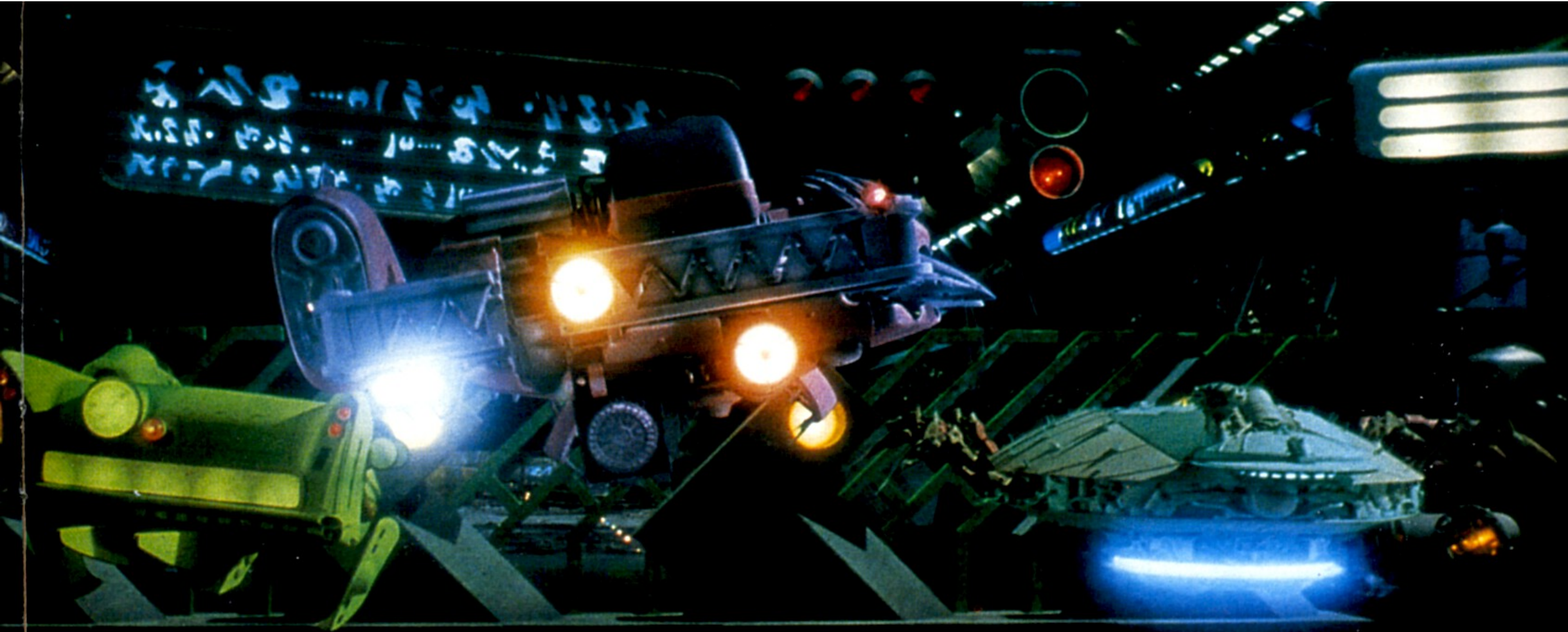
The compliment has been returned with "Space Race," which bears a striking surface similarity to "Star Tours." "Space Race" is Showscan's first attempt at a themed simulator, which means that visitors get the full spaceport treatment, down to the pre-boarding instructions by space flight attendants wearing spaceport uniforms and the International Space Agency logo on the admission ticket.

The film for "Space Race" was made by Industrial Light and Magic, the industry-leading special effects branch of LucasArts and, not so coincidentally, the creators of George Lucas' STAR WARS-themed "Star Tours." The plot of "Space Race" is similar to that of "Star Tours": both rides begin as uneventful tours of the cosmos and, as a result of pilot error, rapidly escalate into high-speed chases with the pilots forced to dodge a variety of interstellar obstacles before being able to return safely to home port. Participants in "Space Race" travel aboard a Pan-Galactic Spaceways scramjet piloted by Captain Mandrake, whose attempt to get close to a prototype black

Showscan's first themed simulator gives visitors the full spaceport treatment before they board scramjet "Andrew."







The whimsical designs by Industrial Light and Magic for the competing spacecraft in "Space Race" include Crabby (left) and Hot Rod (right).

hole generator being tested in Earth orbit results in the scramjet being pulled through the black hole and onto a bizarre floating race track, on which a high-speed race-cum-demolition derby among a variety of alien spacecraft is in progress. Upon discovering that a force field is preventing the scramjet from leaving the track, Mandrake enters the completion with gusto, taking his passengers along for the ride. After a brief pit stop in which alien mechanics soup up the scramjet, Mandrake is able to avoid collisions with the other craft, win the race by a nose, and return the scramjet to Earth space where it docks at the space station that serves as its home port, all within the four-and-a-half minute duration of the ride.

Despite the external similarities, there is one important element that distinguishes "Space Race" from "Star

Tours:" the film for "Space Race" was shot in the Showscan format, which makes all the difference in the virtual world. Showscan, which consists of 70mm film run at a rate of 60 frames-per-second, creates a film image virtually indistinguishable from reality.

Having become frustrated trying to overcome the inertia in a film industry intent on sticking with standards set in the late '20s, Douglas Trumbull (2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY) founded the Showscan Corporation in 1984 to develop his process with the intent of making it the new standard for feature films. Although this dream never materialized, Showscan has been trying to find new applications for the technology ever since, such as combining it with Dynamic Motion Simulators for TOUR OF THE UNIVERSE. Since then, Showscan has redesigned their simulators, ar-

ticulating their seats by row rather than the entire room. In their newer simulators, the room, including a movie screen, remains stationary while the rows of seats move. A large safety bar that runs the length of each row, similar to those found on roller coaster cars, is lowered into place before each screening to keep members of the audience from being pitched off the simulator during a particularly sharp movement.

The movements are added after the film is shot and edited, when the engineers can experiment with what syncs up to the action on screen. Once the programming has been locked in for a particular simulation, there is still some flexibility available to the ride operator as to how the ride will feel. Each Dynamic Motion Simulator comes equipped with a touch-sensitive screen that al-

lows the operator to set the intensity of the ride on a scale of one to five. Judging from the jarring bumpiness of level two, level five is seldom used.

Level five may be seldom used, but simulator rides are far from reaching their outer limits. Showscan recently made a \$4.5-million sale of two of its theatres to casinos in Biloxi, Mississippi, and State-line, Nevada, while Trumbull unveiled his newest effort at the Luxor Las Vegas. According to the Showscan inventor (whose connection to the company is now purely financial, though he returns occasionally to see how his brainchild is developing) we are seeing only the beginning of what large-format films can do to immerse audiences in a seemingly real environment: "I believe the time is right for the best creative talents in the industry to cross over into these new and powerful film technologies." □

# DONALD G. JACKSON

## A CAREER ON THE FRINGE

**A look at the cult auteur who gave us demon lovers and rollerblade warriors.**

*By Steve Biodrowski  
& Dennis Fischer*

While low-budget films are doing increasingly poorly theatrically, the great maw of television, with promises of over 100 channels from which to choose, means that there will continue to be a demand for low-brow, unpretentious, but entertaining exploitation films. Along with Charles Band's Full Moon Entertainment, the friendly if untalented folks at Troma, and the prolific Fred Olen Ray, Donald G. Jackson is one of several current filmmakers who seeks to fill this demand with direct-to-video movies such as *ROLLERBLADE WARRIORS* and *HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN*.

Jackson got his start when a commercial photographer handed him a Bolex camera to take an assignment the photographer couldn't do himself. After experimenting with the camera while filming a high school football game, Jackson decided to give up on his plans to be a comic book artist (though comic books have obviously influenced his filmmaking sensibilities). Attending the annual film festival at the University of Michigan inspired him to raise the money for his directorial debut, a horror film entitled *THE DEMON LOVER*



Above: Jackson and two of the title characters pose on the Vasquez Rocks location of *ROLLERBLADE WARRIORS*. Right: Jackson himself photographs the irrelevant T&A slave girl subplot; and, being salacious hypocrites, we run a photo of it.

(released on video under the titles *DEVIL MASTER* and *THE COVEN*).

"*TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE* had just come out," Jackson remembers. "I was able to get in touch with Tobe Hooper, who provided a lot of guidance and inspiration. I also got in touch with Gunnar Hansen, who came to Michigan and played Professor Peckinpah in *THE DEMON*

*LOVER*."

Jackson's filmmaking partner on this maiden effort was Jerry Younkins, who not only starred but is credited with co-writing, co-producing, and co-directing the 1977 release, and who, according to a documentary made about the film, *THE DEMON LOVER DIARY*, amputated a finger to collect insurance money to complete the feature—to think of that

kind of sacrifice for this kind of art is perhaps the most horrifying thing about this initial fright foray.

A forerunner of today's *FRI-DAY THE 13TH*-type movies, *THE DEMON LOVER* is the story of a demonologist who becomes enraged when he realizes his coven of teenagers attend his black masses for kicks, not out of any serious



devotion to the occult. He summons a demon to destroy them in a series of grisly murders. The film is amateurish in almost every department (photography, acting, and especially direction), but makes a bid for fan acceptance by naming characters and places after people such as comic book artists Jack Kirby and Frank Frazetta, personality Forrest Ackerman, and, of course,



Two shots from Jackson's feature debut, *DEMON LOVER*. Left: Jackson (at right) frames a shot, while future effects expert Dennis Skotak holds the boom. Above: Jackson and assistant Jean Whipple confer with star Gunnar Hansen.

Tobe Hooper.

The initial distributor, Wolf Lore Cinema, Ltd., quickly went bust, leaving the film stranded and Jackson eager to recoup his investment. "At the time, the only outlet was theatrical, and most people got ripped off, including us," says Jackson. "I tried distributing myself for a while, but the theatres would play the picture and not pay me. Then I went through a distributor in New York, and he did the same thing. We only had seven prints. We played the Southern drive-in circuit, and they didn't pay."

In 1980, Jackson shot wrestling footage for a planned rock-n-roll wrestling horror movie to be titled *RINGSIDE IN HELL*. The project never materialized in its intended form, but four years later, after moving from Ann Arbor, Michigan to California, Jackson managed to fashion the footage into the wrestling documentary *I LIKE TO HURT PEOPLE*, which was picked up by New World for video distribution.

Jackson spent his first few years in California shooting special effects for Roger Corman and working at Graphic Films. His next dramatic feature was *ROLLERBLADE*, an extremely low-budget, post-apocalyptic science fiction fan-

tasy which concerned the adventures of the Cosmic order of Rollerblade, a group of "rebel nuns on skates with knives," explains Jackson.

"I was trying to make an all-female version of the Knights of the Round Table. I didn't want to offend any religious groups—although that might have been a good idea for publicity: 'The Last Temptation of Mother Speed'—so I decided to go with the smile face as the symbol of artificial goodness. Also, where I grew up, there was a Catholic church on one side, and on the other was a roller rink—I'm starting to wonder if there's a connection."

The film was shot MOS (Mid Out Sound) with a Bolex camera, the action entirely improvised and financed with

Jackson's Visa card. After investing \$10,000 in the project, he took his footage to New World, which was looking for its first direct-to-video feature. New World reimbursed Jackson for his initial investment and gave him an additional \$60,000 to finish the film and shoot a few video opticals.

Set in the City of Lost Angels during the Second Dark Age, a female skating Hunter (Shaun Michelle) is sent by the evil Dr. Saticoy (Robby Taylor, who also plays Deputy Samuel) to infiltrate the Cosmic Order in order to steal their power crystals, the last viable power source in this skate-crazy future. Meanwhile, Marshall Goodman (Jeff Hutchinson) discovers that Saticoy has kidnapped his son Chris (Christopher Douglas-Olen

Ray) and sets off to rescue him. The Hunter, redubbed Sister Fortune, accomplishes her mission, but becomes converted and is pursued by Sister Cross (Suzanne Solari) who seeks the return of the power crystal. Femme fave Michelle Bauer plays one of the undressed nuns kidnapped by Saticoy, providing the needed exploitation angle for the film.

*ROLLERBLADE* is better photographed than *DEMON LOVER*, and Jackson continued to refine his directing skills, but the pseudo-biblical dialogue with its *thees*, *thous* and "yea, verily man," and the amateurish acting are embarrassingly bad. The final product went on to become his biggest financial success ("I'm still getting residual checks.") and led to his next feature, *HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN*, also for New World.

First, however, Jackson claims he worked with James Cameron doing second unit on *THE TERMINATOR* (though he receives no credit on-screen). Says Jackson, "They had finished shooting, and Orion-Hemdale said they weren't putting any more money into the picture. Cameron insisted it needed all kinds of inserts and reshoots, so he paid me out of his own pocket to go out and film additional scenes. It was an interesting crew: me, Jim

In *FROGTOWN II*, the Rollerblade Warriors, identifiable by their trademark happy face emblem, make an in-joke appearance as backup singers for a frog band.



Cameron and Gale Ann Hurd carrying the camera gear around and moving the lights. It was supposed to be a secret shoot. They didn't want anybody from Orion-Hemdale to know that we were tampering with what was supposed to be a locked print."

Jackson says he photographed 15 days of additional footage for Cameron, mostly insert closeups used to punch up the editing of some scenes (bullets being loaded, guns fired, etc.), but he also worked with Michael Biehn and Arnold Schwarzenegger for a few shots. Later, Jackson would also help photograph Cameron's rock video song "Reach" by Martini Ranch, a band put together by actor Bill Paxton. Jackson has also assisted on numerous Fred Olen Ray productions.

Jackson hoped that HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN would do for him what THE TERMINATOR did for Cameron: establish him as a director to be reckoned with. Unfortunately, the production turned out to be a very frustrating experience. Although New World liked his script (co-written with partner Randall Frakes), they didn't believe the film could be shot for under \$1 million, and they didn't trust Jackson with a larger budget, so they insisted he work with co-director R. J. Kizer (who shot additional scenes for the American release of GODZILLA 1985). Co-producer and co-director Jackson was not allowed to control the film, which went over budget and over schedule. Midway through the shooting, Jackson, who prefers to photograph as well as direct his films, was replaced as cinematographer after an argument with the art director (Suzette Sheets).

"The script was cut so drastically, it did not resemble the action script we wrote," said Jackson, who judges that only 60% of his script made it to the screen. "The other 40% was the action that would have made the picture sell." The film is something of a guilty pleasure. It relates how fertile herman Sam Hell (Rowdy Roddy Piper) is recruited by MedTech to inseminate still-fertile females in a post-nuclear world.

#### MOVING INTO THE MAINSTREAM?

**"The people getting noticed nowadays are the ones who do things on an ultra-low budget and manage to get into theatres. We shot a movie in a week, to get into art houses."**



Left to right: Peter Paul Fate (William Black), director Donald G. Jackson, and Luther Fate (Troy Froman), while filming TWISTED FATE.

Hell is forced to wear a steel jockstrap, which is controlled by Spangle (Sandhal Bergman, who plays her part very straight) with pain devices to keep him in line. They are sent out to Frogtown to rescue some women kept by Commander Toty (Brian Frank), the leader of the frog mutants. The film features some amusing, offbeat humor as well as some impressive mutant frog makeups by Steve Wang.

Jackson immediately jumped into his ROLLERBLADE sequel, ROLLERBLADE WARRIORS: TAKEN BY FORCE. After a personnel change, New World Pictures was no longer interested in the property, but fortunately Jackson's attorney had a client who recently came into an inheritance and wanted to produce a film. Jackson showed the script to the client, former actress Wheeler Henderson, and she agreed to finance the project to the tune of \$500,000, which far exceeded the budget of the original.

"Toward the end of the first ROLLERBLADE, I was just

getting to the point where I really liked it," he comments. "I thought it would be great, if I ever had the money, to go back and do the big-budget version. I got the idea I wanted to make three of them, the ROLLERBLADE trilogy. Also, I wanted to go back to some of the locations and shoot a lot of the shots I couldn't do for HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN."

The script was written by Jackson's collaborator, Randall Frakes (under the pseudonym of Lloyd Strathern), from a story by Jackson. Not a direct sequel, the film's continuity is the concept of the Mystic Order of Rollerblade, a sort of "samurai sisterhood," as Jackson puts it.

This time out, the film's plotline (actually merely an excuse to string together the action sequences there were the film's *raison d'être*) involves Sister Cross (HALLOWEEN IV's Kathleen Kinmont), who must rescue seer Gretchen Hope (Elizabeth Kaitan from ASSAULT OF THE KILLER BIMBOS) from the town of Abad-

don, where the villainous Rinaldi (Jack Damon) plans to sacrifice her to a mutant responsible for the city's power supply.

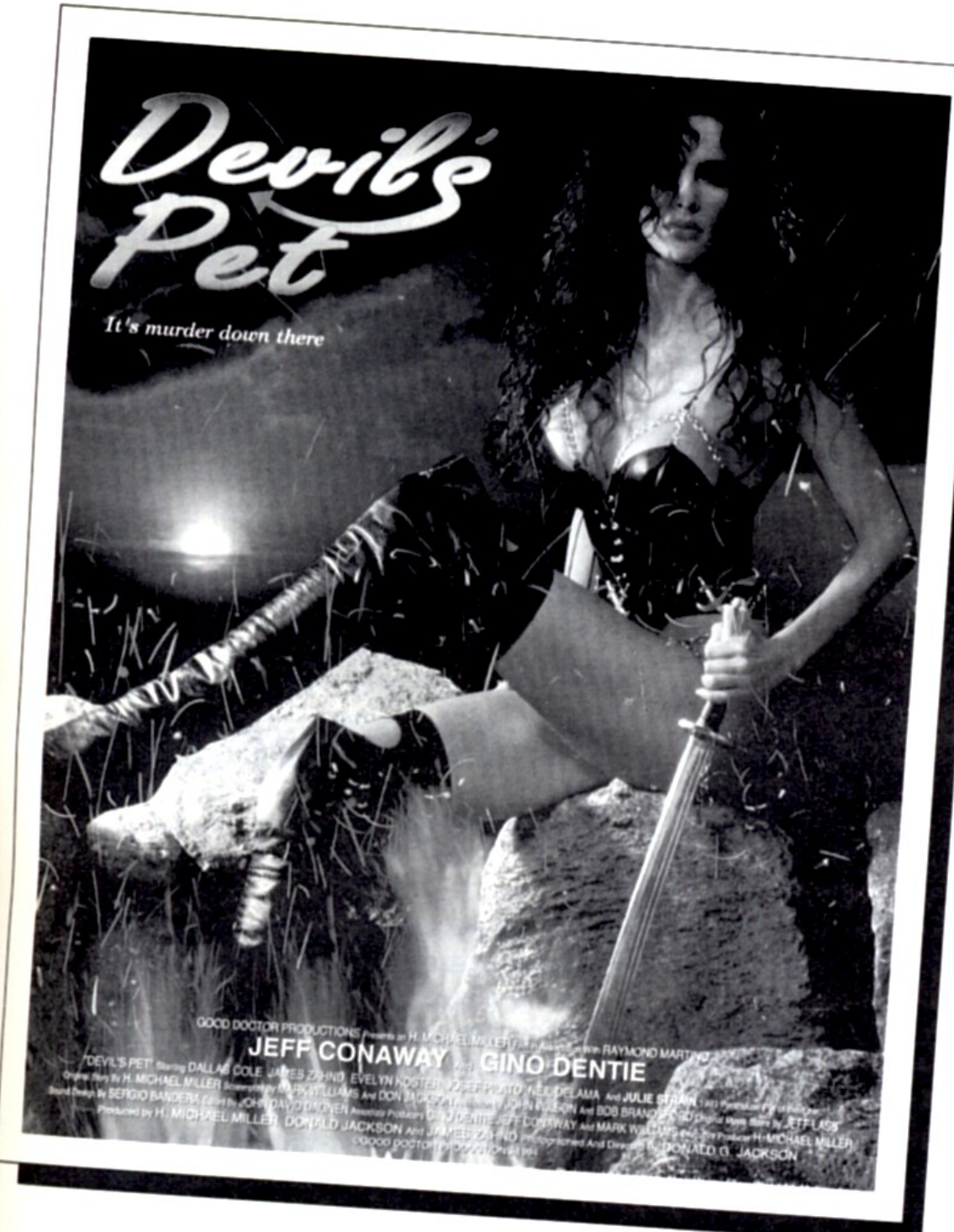
ROLLERBLADE WARRIORS was an attempt to accomplish what he had been prevented from doing successfully in HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN: craft a fantasy-oriented action-adventure film in the style of Japanese samurai movies and Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns. "It was so nice not to have to go through a committee before I could move the camera to another angle," Jackson remarks.

The film is a considerable jump in quality over ROLLERBLADE and HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN, although the pacing bogs down due to weak plotting and its strengths are somewhat negated by misguided sexist attempts at black humor. Especially egregious is Gretchen's rape scene, which is actually played for laughs. The role was originally turned down by Michelle Bauer, who found the sequence too offensive.

Unfortunately for Jackson, distributor Manson International underwent a change of heart by the film's completion, deciding they no longer wished to be associated with exploitation fair. As a result, the film was released theatrically only in foreign markets and went direct to cable here in the U.S.

Jackson's next job was as both cinematographer and production manager on OLD SCORES for Joe Straw, a former Cannon Films accountant-turned-director. Jackson describes the film as a "performance piece for the actors—a love triangle involving drug dealing, along the lines of a MIAMI VICE episode." Although the film was somewhat different from his other projects, it paid off for him when the art director introduced him to an investor who wanted to finance his next directorial effort, TWISTED FATE, the story of three women whose vacation is interrupted by two psychotics known as the Fate Brothers.

Taking its cue from Robert Montgomery's innovative LADY IN THE LAKE, which was



Ad slick for Jackson's recent **THE DEVIL'S PET**, retitled from **LAST IMPRESSIONS** to capitalize on Julie Strain's Pet of the Year title.

shot entirely in subjective p.o.v. style (i.e. everything we see is from one character's personal point of view—a technique used in the opening of Mammoulian's **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** and as a device to hide Humphrey Bogart's original face in **DARK PASSAGE**), **TWISTED FATE** is told through the lens of a video camera one of the women brings along, as if the entire film has been taped live.

"The idea is four girls are going up to a cabin in the mountains, and one can't make it, so she says, 'Take my Camcorder and videotape each other so I'll see what I missed.' When the Fate brothers show up, they pick up the camera and start filming as they harass the girls and put them through a heavy-duty ordeal."

Jackson co-wrote the script with Randall Frakes, tailoring the characters for actors he knew: Julie Nine, Nancy Jury, and Suzanne Solari as the unfortunate women, and William Black and Troy Froman as Peter Paul and Luther Fate. Art

director Eric Warren liked the script and agreed to co-produce the film, raising the budget from private investors. "Then we put together the world's smallest film crew and the world's greatest caterer and kidnapped everybody for a weekend," Jackson laughs.

"It was the only way I could get the results I wanted," he explains. "I wanted to get realism from the performers, and in order to do that I wanted to put them through an ordeal where this almost took place in real time—as if you drove 150

miles and you're tired and that night two crazy brothers wake you up with a blinding movie light and start filming as they torment you. To get that realism, you don't want it to look slick—you don't want to shoot 20 or 30 takes. I wanted the camera to be a little sloppy, to go out of focus; I wanted it to look like these characters actually shot the thing. The whole project was geared toward that, which meant it would look real, and it wouldn't cost much money." No doubt Jackson was also hoping to achieve the intensity of **HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER**, which received both critical kudos and box office success for utilizing a similar approach.

Filmed with a 2:1 shooting ratio and a mere 15,000 feet of film shot over 72 hours including rehearsals, the film is an attempt to establish the Fate Brothers as villains in a series of films, which have yet to materialize. "So far I think it's the best thing I've done," says Jackson. "It's much more mainstream, plus it's done in a very unique style." The intended sequel, to be called **RETURN OF THE FATE BROTHERS**, would pick up the story where **TWISTED FATE** leaves off, but would drop the video camera p.o.v. style in favor of a bigger budget, more mainstream look.

Just prior to the success of Steve Barron's **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES**, when the commercial viability of talking amphibians no longer seemed like such a gamble to Jackson, he acquired the rights to make a **FROGTOWN** sequel from New World, who considered them worthless

Jackson expanded the **ROLLERBLADE** saga into a tetralogy with **THE ROLLERBLADE SEVEN** and **RETURN OF THE ROLLERBLADE SEVEN**.



**MANIAC COP's** Robert Z'dar replaced Rowdy Roddy Piper as Sam Hell in **HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN II**.

and relinquished them in return for 5% of the profits.

**RETURN TO FROGTOWN** (as it's known on video) or **HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN II** (as it's called on HBO) replaces former wrestler Roddy Piper with Robert (**MANIAC COP**) Z'dar as Sam Hell, now a member of the Texas Rocket Rangers sent on a mission to rescue Lou Ferrigno as Ranger Jones from the clutches of evil twins Professor Tanzer and Czar Frogmeister (Brion James). Jackson was inspired by the **ROCKETMEN** serials (not to mention **THE ROCKETEER**), and even employed Ted Lydecker (the brother of Howard Lydecker, who produced the flying scenes in the serials) to do the flying shots for his film.

Sandy Collaro, who has worked with Rob Bottin and Stan Winston, takes over the frog makeup chores from Steve Wang, who handled the original. Collaro had to produce 30 frog heads and three mechanical heads in only two weeks. To hide bad seams and trapped air bubbles, Collaro pulled out the creative stops and designed colorful frog designs full of spots and stripes.

The producer for this sequel was Scott Pfeiffer, while Jackson secured financing from

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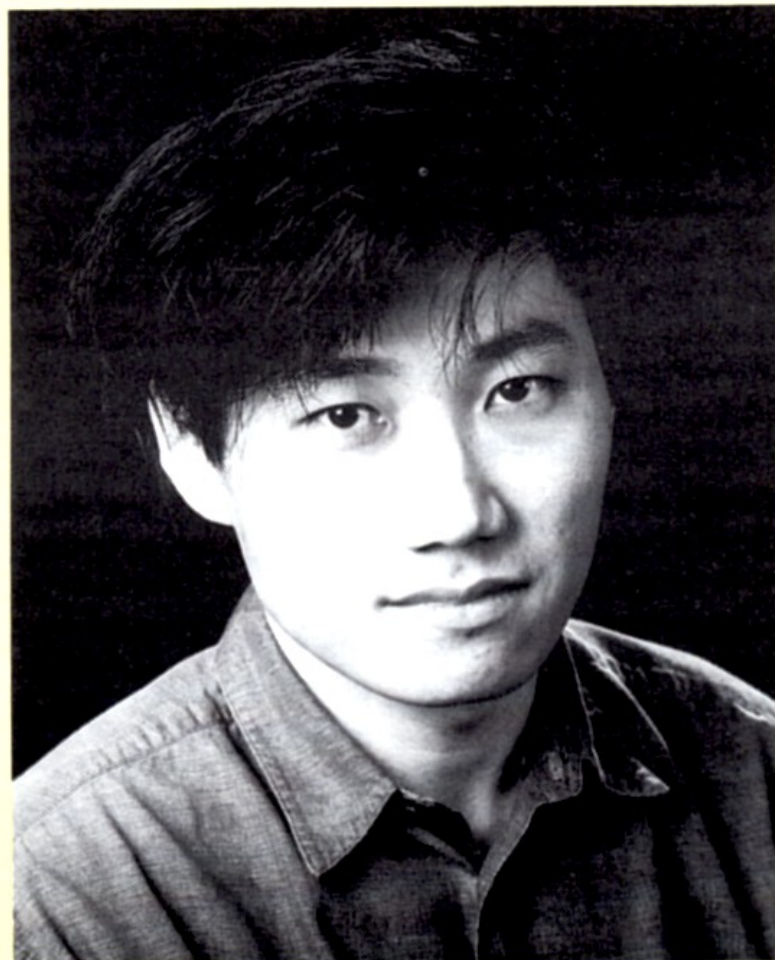
# AEON FLUX

## Creator Peter Chung on the adventures of his morally ambivalent heroine.

By Todd French

What if just as we're cheering one of Arnie's body-count bacchanalia, we find ourselves suddenly switching sympathies with the Terminator's expiring stock villain prey? What if Sly or Seagal were lethally dissed at the start of one of their violence mellers, their killer becoming our new protagonist—for perhaps the next couple minutes before being replaced by another unlikely assassin? Welcome to just a few of the wildly unpredictable adventures of AEON FLUX, animator Peter Chung's morally ambivalent action heroine. The gun-toting, foot fetish miss with the alluring bod and slicked-back coiffure dishes out equal parts ultra-violence and elliptical parody on LIQUID TELEVISION, the MTV cartoon anthology series.

Chung, a 32-year-old animator and Cal Arts alumnus, who has worked for both Disney Studios and Ralph Bakshi (including a six-week drawing stint on the latter's FIRE AND ICE), created the series in 1990 after his bosses at Colossal Pictures pitched his one-page outline to the music video moguls at MTV. The artist remembers the inspiration for his oblique, super-heroic exotica springing from what might strike most viewers as an odd bonding of unlikely, if not downright diametrically opposed, film references. Says Chung, "The idea came after seeing Steven Spielberg's RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK and Stanley Kubrick's A CLOCKWORK ORANGE. I noticed that they were almost the same film. I really thought that CLOCKWORK, on a conscious level, and Spielberg's film, perhaps unconsciously, were using film to glorify or mythify a character who was amoral. In A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, the story is told from the criminal's point of view; there's a subversive intent.



According to Chung, AEON FLUX is about "the interesting seductive quality of transgression, [which] is more compelling than the external threat of traditional villains."

Whereas I thought RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK was pure propaganda, pure White Supremacy. I found the ethno-centrism fascinating. I thought of the idea of doing a film where the main character was doing things that were morally questionable or maybe morally abhorrent, yet portraying it stylistically in such a way as to give you the idea she was the hero. I never saw Aeon as the heroine; to me, she was always the villain." Chung points to such recent films as MAN BITES DOG and UNFORGIVEN as sharing similar thematic concerns with AEON, and cites Michelangelo Antonioni, Jean-Luc Godard, Hitchcock and Japanese animator Osamu Dezaki as major influences. The latter is the creator of GOLGO-13, incidentally, another assassin cel-piece.

For the record, and contrary to popular belief, there *is* a plot to the first season's 12-minute, non-dialogue, cryptic ballisticgram. Aired in six terse, consecutive installments, the breathlessly edited story follows the elusively motivated femme assassin's mission to gun down a tyrant linked to the spread of a deadly virus. Despite the fact that Aeon wipes out enough henchmen to depopulate ten John Woo films, ironically satiric salvos abound, leading to the unexpected, blackly funny pay-off wherein our hit woman, on the brink of icing her target, steps on a nail and free-falls to her death from a vertiginous ledge. It's indicative of AEON FLUX's bucking conventional narrative restraints that Chung provides no background info on the heroine and begins every episode in medias res.

That Chung has a lot more on his mind than racking up the multitudinous pretty-kills of a future-chic LA FEMME NIKITA (the animator's graphic style is a nod to early 20th Century Viennese Expressionist painter Egon Schiele) is clear from the anarchic, nigh Dadaistic tweaking of action-flick conventions that constantly subverts the action adventure conventions at every point. The Voguish Aeon wastes everything in sight with an Olympic gymnast's aplomb, while backed up, like Indiana, with a rousing signature score, via composer-sound man Drew Neumann. Yet, along the way, James Cameronish firepower vies with an almost surreal, off-kilter nihilism: the literally faceless minions doff their masks and hold each other in touching pietas after being gunned down by the remorseless heroine; Aeon blithely tosses the plague antidote in order to use the serum container to lob a grenade at an infected baddie; and, when it turns out Aeon's been after the wrong guy all along (the culprit is actually the

other series repeater, Trevor Goodchild, geneticist, demagogue, and sometime Aeon lover), the futility of her carnage becomes even more pointed.

Considering the outraged public spuma that's been assaulting MTV of late over controversial animation metal-maniacs BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD, it's perhaps surprising that the rock vid powers-that-be have not tried to stem the frequently copious flow of plasma in AEON FLUX. Aside from having to alter a scene with two women in a tub in the first season and lower the kink level of a clinch between Trevor and Agent RU-486 the following year, Chung has pretty much been left to his own devices. This, despite the fact that a typical battle set-piece in AEON comes equipped with a mop brigade ready to clean up after the heroine's excesses.

Says Chung, "Maybe it's dangerous of me to say this, but I actually think the problem with commercial television violence is not that it's gratuitous, but that it's purposeful. I think when you say that violence is an acceptable form of resolving conflict, that's when you run into social problems and responsibility. All of the violence in AEON FLUX is gratuitous in the sense that Aeon never achieves what she sets out to do through violent means."

Having killed off his main character in the first season, Chung found himself in a considerable quandary when his sponsors at Colossal decided that they wanted him to resurrect the scantily-clad liquidator. The animator had already started work on a new storyline with completely different characters. When the proposed plot, involving torture and police brutality was coldly received, Chung, in the position of doing another LIQUID TELEVISION season, agreed to bring Aeon back to life, but with the purpose of satirizing yet another of TV's sacred conventions.

"I had to get around the fact that she



In a typical bit of action, our anti-heroine off-handedly offs the opposition.

died," Chung laughs. "So my solution was to make her die in every episode. That was going to be her thing. When I thought about that, it became an interesting pre-supposition; it became the inverse of what a hero in a TV series is—they're always going to survive. Therefore, any time that the hero's life is threatened, as in MCGYVER or HUNTER, or any TV series, you always know they're going to make it, so there's no real suspense; nothing's at stake. Aeon, on the other hand, was going to die; she was going to fail in her mission. All the episodes in the second season were about different aspects of Aeon Flux's death. They weren't so much parodies of heroic action; I was really focusing on the portrayal of death. I had always been dissatisfied with the way death was portrayed in film, and in getting the feeling of actually dying with the character."

To this end, the five episodes, ranging from lengths of three to five minutes, delightfully offed the fatalistic protagonist in a variety of imaginative ways, while providing acute and mordant commentary on

technology, xenophobia, war and the instability of interpersonal relationships. The season's coda, the "war" episode, undeniably stands as not only the best AEON, but the medium's finest take on the ultimate waste of aggression. Co-directed by Chung and Gerrett Sheldrew, the short wickedly deflates pat cinephile concepts of audience identification through the splashy, arbitrary heroics of four different—short-lived—protagonists. Of all the AEON shows, Chung's personal favorite remains the fourth. Composed of a repeated cycle of 20 two-second shots the episode charts the ever-shifting passions and allegiances between Aeon, allied female agent RU-486, and Trevor Goodchild. As Aeon strives to keep her mind on business (finding a plug to keep a man-made island

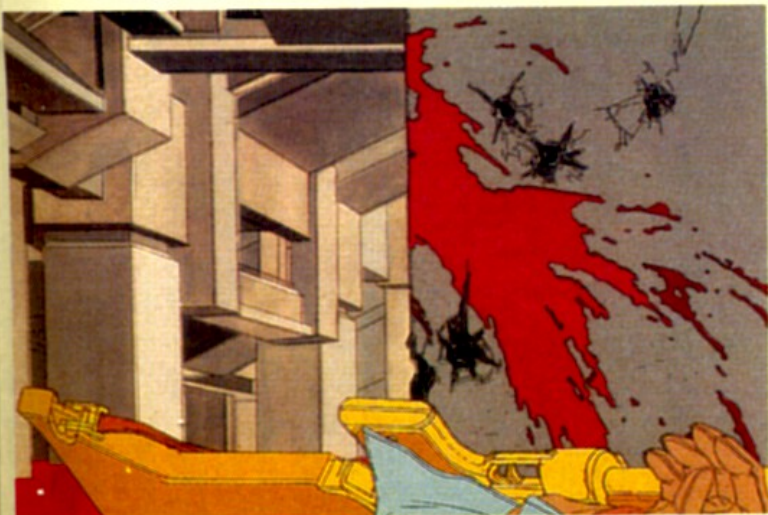
afloat) she increasingly sees her mission compromised by a skulking gun-man and the libidinous activities of RU-486 and the captive Trevor.

"It points in the direction I want to go in the third season," Chung states. "To me, it was about the changing dynamics between three characters. It started out being a formal experiment in structure; I wanted to direct a piece staged in a manner where the camera angles and duration of the shot was not dictated by the content. I was interested in what kind of emotional, psychological effect you could achieve if you structured it more like a piece of music. That was the analogy I used; music is able to generate emotional response through rhythm. I think Alain Robbe-Grillet, a French novelist and filmmaker was the conscious influence on the piece."

Currently negotiating a deal to make a series of 13 half-hour episodes for the

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Some examples (below) of the blood-spattered carnage that results whenever Aeon (right) goes into action. Chung explains that he was interested in "doing a film where the main character was doing things that were morally questionable. I never saw [her] as the heroine; to me, she was always the villain."



# FREAKED

## Hideous Mutant Monster Makeup Effects.

By Steve Biodrowski

FREAKED is a film that was given little chance to find its audience. 20th Century Fox gave minimal midnight bookings, with little advertising support, to the potential cult hit (favorably reviewed in *CFQ* 25:2 by Judith P. Harris, who called it "fast, funny...goofy fun, in an AIRPLANE-kind of way). But thanks to the modern wonder of home video, viewers will soon have an opportunity to discover what they missed.

Tony Gardner's team designed the rig that effected Sockhead's lip sync to Bobcat Goldthwait's voice.

Part of the film's weird visual appeal derives from the decision to hire three separate makeup companies: Screaming Mad George's Surrealistic Effects, Tony Gardner's Alterian Studios, and Steve Johnson's XFX. Besides the greater efficiency of dividing up the work, the writing-directing team of Tom Stern and Alex Winter were also aiming to "cast" the artists according to their specialties.

"We noticed different aesthetics," explains Stern. "George is good with surrealistic stuff, so he was a good choice when we had a three-foot high eyeball or a guy with a huge nose for a head." Adds Winter, "Tony is real technical and innovative with mechanics. The worm character required a complicated rig—that was right up Tony's alley." And Stern concludes, "Steve had these Big Daddy Roth-looking monsters around his shop, and we wanted that style monster for the climax."

First to come on board was Screaming Mad George. During the early developmental stages, when the film was intended to be a much more bizarre and offbeat cult item, he provided a series of pre-production designs "which are totally different from what we did" in the final film, he explains. "The whole idea was slightly different: Elijah was having a lot of kids who were mutants, and they wanted [punk rockers] the Butthole Surfers to play them. Of course, I like these really underground things, but I wasn't really sure if they could make this film, because it's expensive."

Revising the script got the independent production a negative pickup deal from Fox. "It became funnier, not really underground; I think it was a good progression," says George. "For every step, I did different characters. They used the designs for presenting the project to Fox. After it was a go, they brought in the other companies, and each did its own design, according to



The unwilling side show attractions in FREAKED: the large cast of unusual characters necessitated the use of three separate makeup effects facilities.

the script, not really according to what I'd done. So my credit reads 'Preliminary Design.' I think that's fair."

Besides the aforementioned walking eyeballs, George and his crew also supplied Toad and Nosey, plus several other effects, such as melting William Sadler's character. George agrees with Stern and Winter's assessment of the surrealism he brought to his work. "That's my forte," he says. "My mentor is Dali. My conceptual style is trying to go for the surrealistic attitude rather than the monster-making attitude. I think you can make a neat looking monster, but I like something odd."

Cowboy, Sockhead, Ortiz the Dog Boy,

Alex Winter's Big Daddy Roth-inspired makeup was provided by Bill Corso at Steve Johnson's XFX.







Left to right: the Eternal Flame (Lee Arenberg), Frogman (Tim Burns), Cowboy (John Hawkes), the Rick Monster (Vincent Hammond), Julie Ernie (Megan Ward and Michael Stoyenov), the Giant Stuey Monster (Jon Chu), the Worm (Derek McGrath), the Bearded Lady (Mr. T), and Rosie the Pinhead (Patti Tippe).

and the Bearded Lady were given to Tony Gardner. "They divided the show according to each person's previous history," he recounts. "Rastafari eyeballs just sound very Screaming Mad George, and Steve had recently done a lot of Big Daddy Roth characters. People say we take fantasy characters and give them enough reality so that they can stand next to a normal person. I know we got the Dog Boy because we had done so much fur work in the past."

One of Gardner's more interesting challenges was turning Karyn Malchus [profiled on Page 50] into a man with a socklike puppet for a head. "For Karyn, it was a lot of new stuff," he explains. "SLEEPWALKERS was real straightforward. She did good, so we said, 'Karyn, you're really small—want to wear another character suit? She gradually ended up totally encased in this heavy helmet rig with an animatronic hand on her head. We had to put lifts in her shoes and extend the length of her arms and the height of her shoulders—basically hide her in the body of a six-foot-five-inch man but not make it look like she could not use her arms, and she wore foam gloves to fill her hands out and make them more masculine."

"The one thing that bounced around was Julie and Ernie, the two-headed character," he adds. "I had done Dexter and Donald Addams for THE ADDAMS FAMILY and the Good and Evil Ash in ARMY

OF DARKNESS, so I didn't want to do another two-headed character. Ironically, a lot of the guys who were here for those films were at Steve's shop for this, so they got stuck having to do it all over again!"

"I almost didn't want to do the Siamese Twins," Johnson admits. "It wasn't an artistic challenge, more a technical challenge. We ended up with a fully mechanical puppet that strapped onto the actor: if the girl was more important for the shot, we would strap on the puppet for the guy, and we did the opposite if the guy was more important. We also had a very bizarre—people called it our 'Frederick's of Hollywood from Hell'—rig, for waist-up shots of both actors: a device with velcro, hooks, and padding to hold them as tightly together as possible, so it didn't look like one was behind the other."

Johnson is especially proud of the makeup for Winter. "I think it's some of the most innovative stuff we've ever done. Alex is one-half monster throughout 90% of the film, and his mouth gets incredibly big on one side, so it took a lot of mechanical devices and Lon Chaney-derivative things to make that mouth work. I was impressed with Alex. He co-wrote and co-directed this movie—and starred in this four-and-a-half hour makeup. He was always in a good mood about it, and he didn't mind being tortured. We put a pacifier ring in his nostril for the monster side of his nose and a device to keep his mouth

**“We noted the different aesthetics: George is good with surrealistic stuff; Tony is technical; and Steve did these Big Daddy Roth monsters.”**

*—Directors Stern & Winter—*

pulled back. He was so into it, the Lon Chaney Senior thing—he got off on it."

Johnson deemphasizes the theory that the the makeup companies have clearly defined fields of expertise. "In a sense, that's a valid line of reasoning, but we're all specialists at what no one else can do—anything that falls outside the standard departments, we do. I do think it's valid to say that some people are good at appliance makeup or old-age makeup but not to say that one person is good at a cartoon character but not as good at a fantasy character."

Although the film failed to find its audience in theatres, Johnson believes its appeal need not be limited by the cartoon nature of its characters. "It's NINJA TURTLES with an edge—the humor is very mean-spirited, but people like that, especially kids, and there's a lot of humor that only adults will get." □

**Screaming Mad George's surrealistic style was deemed appropriate for Toad (Jaime Cardriche).**





# BEAUTY

## Karyn Malchus

By Steve Biodrowski

Along with such sexist science-fiction phrases as "to boldly go where no man has gone before," the cliched designation "man-in-a-suit" may be one that requires new wording to bring it up to date with the realities of the 1990s. One person responsible for that necessity is Karyn Malchus, who has come to be known within the inner circles of makeup effects shops as a specialist at the arduous and unenviable task of performing within elaborate creature suits.

Of course, the last thing for which most actors train is to perform beneath pounds of rubber, and Malchus is no exception. "I didn't come out of USC saying, 'I'm going to be a monster,'" she laughs. Actually, her introduction to this specialized field came from being the sister-in-law of Tony Gardner, who heads Alterian Studios. Initially, she was "cast" because of the basic physical requirements of an effect on *CAST A DEADLY SPELL*, but she soon proved to have a particular aptitude for the work.

"There was something they called the 'Oatmeal Demon,' and they needed somebody with really thin arms. So Tony said, 'Karen, you would be perfect for this.' It was puppeteering, basically, and from that point he wondered how I would move around in a full suit. Most people say it's limiting, because it's foam latex, and it's hot, and there's a lot of elements that many people might not be able to deal with. But coming from a dancer's point of view, I didn't really

have a problem with it, and I could do more things. For instance, I was joking around and dancing to 'Thriller' in it, and he was saying, 'If you can do that much, you can always bring it down to what the director's calling for.' So he kept me in mind. Then when *SLEEPWALKERS* came up, he thought, 'Okay, let's use her.'"

*SLEEPWALKERS* soon led to even more difficult assignments on *FREAKED*, *TOMMY-KNOCKERS*, and *HOCUS POCUS*. In the first, she plays Sockhead, a character with a hand in place of his head, covered with a socklike puppet, whose voice is provided by comedian Bobcat Goldthwait.

Because the voice was post-dubbed rather than pre-recorded, Malchus felt free to give her own performance without having to match up with another actor. "I didn't have to mimic anybody," she explains. "I could make the character whatever I wanted, whereas in *SLEEPWALKERS*, I had to go on set and watch Alice [Krige]. I was playing her character [in monster form], so I had to make sure I was not doing anything totally uncharacteristic of her. But with *FREAKED*, Bobcat did the voice afterward. That's better, because you feel like you get to create something."

Vision was impaired by having to see out through a netted shirt where the character's chest was supposed to be. This handicap added to the difficulty of performing some of the actions. "I got squibbed 33 times," she recalls. "I had never done that before. I had to stand there for two hours while they lined up three cameras, so we could get it in one take, because it was not a big budget. So I had gone out renting films like *THE GODFATHER*,

Malchus' dance training (below left) aided her monstrous appearances in *SLEEPWALKERS* (below right) and *TOMMYKNOCKERS* (above).



# IN THE BEAST

is not just another man-in-a-suit.

thinking, 'I've got to get it right.' After standing there for two hours, I was glad I only had to do it once; if I'd had to stand there for another two hours, I might have keeled over. But it turned out well—it's a great death scene."

Ironically, these pyrotechnics turned out to be relatively easy. "When I knew that scene was coming up, I thought it would be the hardest. After a day off, I came back and had to do this freak show. Everybody had a little spot in it, and mine was ringing bells and singing a song—and everybody in the audience pelts me with vegetables. Well, that turned out to be *much* worse! Forty extras throwing beets and potatoes at me, and I couldn't see to dodge them! That was a situation where I was really wondering if it was worth it. They weren't cooked, so they didn't splatter. I got bonked on the nose with a potato, and I thought, 'You know, I do want an acting career, so please don't ruin my face!' But I loved working on that film with Alex [Winter] and Tom [Stern]. Usually in these films, you come in at the end, because you're the monster, and by the time they get to you, they've done eight weeks of shooting, and they think, 'Okay, it's just effects,' so it's very mechanical. On *FREAKS*, we were all playing principal characters."

THE TOMMYKNOCKERS put Malchus back in a monster suit. The project initially seemed exciting, because it offered a trip to New Zealand, but the actual production turned out to be an unpleasant experience. "The conditions from the production company were not good," she admits. "They went outside the country to save money, and they used a New Zealand crew, who were

great, but they were pressed for time. We were working fifteen-hour days, and no one was getting overtime; on *FREAKED*, we worked twelve- or thirteen-hour days, but you were appreciated, which helps. They were ingenious about what they needed to do, but they didn't always have the resources. My character was balanced on leg extensions, and for the harness they built a rig between two ladders. At one point a C-clamp fell on someone's head, and they had to go to the hospital. It seemed unsafe. Here, there are people whose only job is to make sure you are safe."

Also unfortunate was a lack of understanding in regard to photographing makeup, which had to be rectified by the Alterian crew while Gardner remained in the U.S. working on *HOCUS POCUS*. "Basically, Tony's crew went in and relit the whole set. Any segments with the aliens were directed by Brian Penikas. Because, of course, if you put hospital lighting on a rubber suit, it's not going to look good. All in all, I think they pulled it off, and I loved that character, because it was my own."

Returning home, Malchus jumped into a zombie makeup for *HOCUS POCUS*. The character of Billy the Butcher was played by Doug Jones, until the character's head was knocked off. At this point Malchus stepped into a costume similar to Sockhead, with shoulders that went over her head and left her peering out through the character's shirt. "Like *SLEEPWALKERS*, I was having to play someone else playing their character," says the actress. "Usually, what I do is go to the set on my own if I have to mimic someone else, but with this project, I had

been in New Zealand. When I came back, I had no idea what Doug Jones had been doing for the last four weeks. When I finally came in and saw all this schtick he had, like his knees giving out, I thought, 'Oh, no!' What helped me was the first thing we shot was a branch knocking his head back, so all I had to do was pratfalls down a hill. That was one I'm proud of, because it was more like a character than just a monster."

"But it has been interesting doing the monster stuff, because it's helped me explore that dark side," she continues. "You feel sort of tentative about grabbing Jimmy Smits by the neck, but then you break through that. I think it really sells the scene to the audience when you are in sort of a state of rage like you're character is supposed to be—instead of just picking him up like a piece of choreography."

Malchus continues to work with Alterian Studios, most recently doing a stint on *SEAQUEST DSV*. Also, other effects houses are starting to make offers. "With special effects, the circle is so much smaller than Hollywood in general," she explains. "There are a handful of shops that do this kind of work, and if they find somebody who doesn't complain a lot, word gets around. When I'm being interviewed, I always say it's like an integration of my background for movement and my acting training—they go together well for this kind of work. I try to approach it as just a regular acting role; I try to come in like a painter with a pallet and say, 'We can do this.' Sometimes, I think it throws them that I think like that, but then they're always so much more excited when they get the result."

Although she would like to



Taking a breather between takes, the actress mugs for the camera in her TOMMYKNOCKERS suit.

move into other areas, she wouldn't mind continuing to explore the dark side, especially if she could play both the Hyde and the Jekyll role instead of stepping in for another actor when the makeup takes over. "After a couple of years go by and I don't have this look, I'll be able to fit into the psycho-thriller thing. They're not going to let me into those roles yet—unless I do *THE CRUSH II!*" she laughs.

In the meantime, the media attention her work has received, including a profile in *TV GUIDE*, has gotten her a role in a Rod Stewart video, "Shotgun Wedding," which marks the first time audiences have been able to see her face on screen. Soon, she hopes to make the transition to more conventional roles. "Could somebody just typecast me as the girl next door?" she laughs.

continued on page 62

# CRONOS

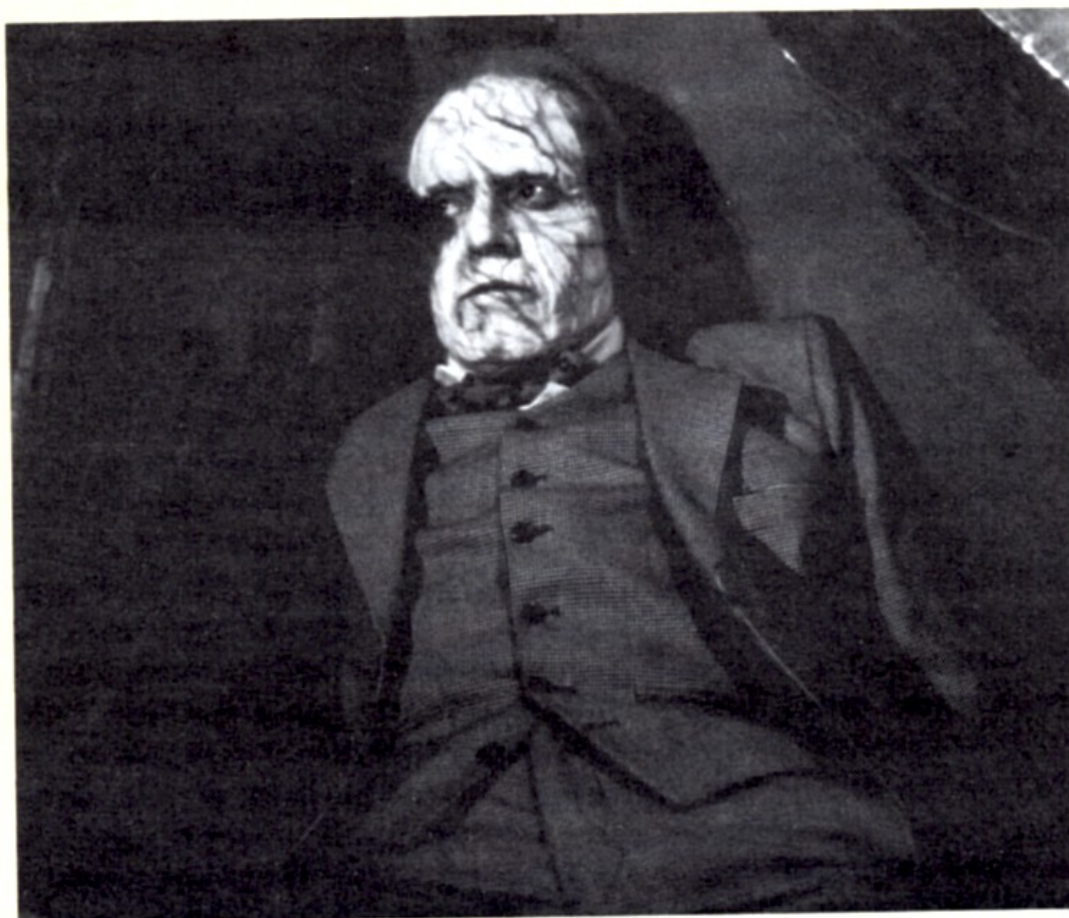
By Steve Biodrowski

If your only familiarity with Mexican fantasy cinema is through titles like *SANTO AND BLUE DEMON VS. DRACULA AND THE WOLFMAN*, then you may be pleasantly surprised by *CRONOS*. This ambitious first feature from writer-director Guillermo del Toro may even be a first step in attracting attention to genre work south of our border, in the same way that Tsui Hark's output attracted viewers who had dismissed Hong Kong cinema as nothing but badly dubbed chop-socky epics.

One of the most expensive films ever to come out of Mexico, *CRONOS* is also one of the most honored, having won the Grand Prize from Critics Week at the Cannes Film Festival after sweeping the 1993 Arieles (Mexico's equivalent of the Oscars). In light of this subsequent critical recognition, it is surprising to note that financing the film was anything but easy: the lengthy opening credits list a variety of government, corporate and private investors, because no single entity would supply the full budget for what is essentially a variation on the vampire sub-genre, by way of alchemy.

"Everybody said I was crazy," del Toro admits. "All my friends told me, except a couple that are really close, 'You're not going to get [the money]. Eventually, the ones that encouraged me told me that secretly they thought I was a fool, too. I still think that there are only two damned genres: one is porno, and the other is horror. You don't very often hear people say, 'I never watch comedies or melodrama.' But you can hear people say, 'I hate porno' or 'I hate horror,' and in Mexico they are, in a way, equivalent to each other for the general population. So I was going to arts foundations and saying, 'I would like to do a movie.' 'Yes, what is it about?' 'Ah, um...vampires.' And they would kick me in the ass, or they would go very lukewarm. In other words, my film got

## A Stylish and Intriguing Tale of Ancient Alchemy and Modern Vampirism.



In the prologue, fate finally catches up with a 16th-century alchemist (Mario Ivan Martinez), who had invented the Cronos Device to keep himself young.

20% financing from the government, when usually they can go anywhere from 50% to even 100%. The budget was \$1.5 million but we ended up spending \$2 million because we financed the rest of it through bank loans; I took one on my house, and the interest in Mexico is about 27% annually."

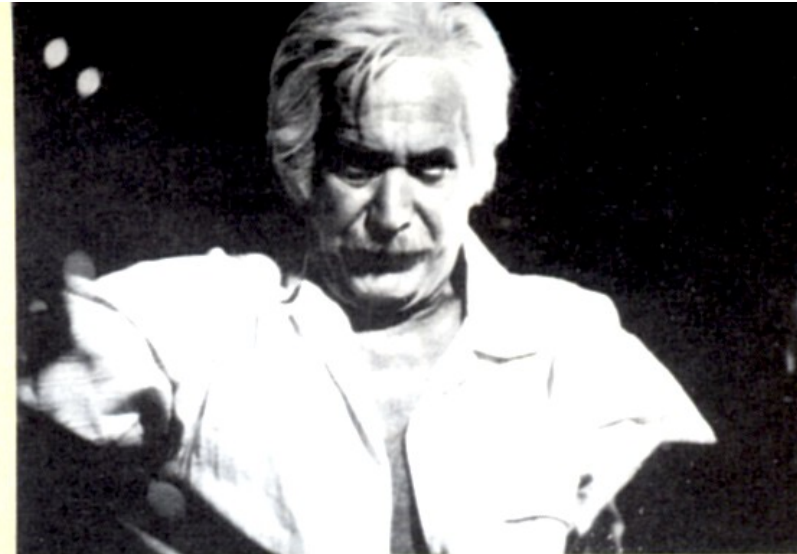
Obviously, the writer-director, who had been working on the script since 1985, was committed to the project—or to use his words, "obsessed by it." He felt a very personal connection to the story, which mostly revolves around a young child helplessly watching a grandparent battle against his own mortality. "It all started because I felt everything was going to pieces. My grandmother was sick and dying; eventually, it took her five painful years. At the same time, I was thinking

about telling a sort of diary of a middle-class 60-year-old guy that turns into a vampire, because I was very interested in seeing how someone who has his own house, feeds himself very well, and has all his basic needs covered—how this guy would react. We know how a teenager would react: in a way, it would just compliment the way they already feel. As a teenager, you feel almost all the time like a vampire—that you are an outsider, that no one understands you. But a guy deeply rooted in a regular establishment—I wanted to see how he reacted to this new addiction. The idea started like that, then avalanched into every single thing I could think of."

Del Toro opted to take a modern, non-glamorous approach to his subject matter, in order to make a film that did not simply recycle what had been seen countless times before. "When I started, my idea was this: I'm going to open with this three-minute prologue that is going to be like a Hollywood movie; then we are going into an almost boring section of everyday life, and into that we are going to put these fantastic elements

that come from the prologue. There is going to be a sharp contrast; then, on top of that, we're going to take every single cliché of the vampire genre and bash it to the ground. In other words, the guy is not going to be sucking on Winona Ryder's neck. He's not going to be a glamorous count with a great wardrobe. He's going to be this pathetic guy with a backwards funeral suit, and he's not going to be resurrected in a fashionable way; he will have been mistreated by this outrageous embalmer. We tried to take all that and make it as real as possible, to contrast the fantasy with reality."

One twist that separates the film from its predecessors is that the protagonist, Jesus Gris (Federico Luppi), is not infected by a vampire's bite but by the sting of an insect within a strange clockwork



Left: Aurora (Tamara Shanath) watches as her grandfather, Jesus Gris (Federico Luppi) discovers the Cronos Device. Top right: Later, Gris uses its power to rejuvenate himself. Bottom right: But then he must confront the brutal Angel de la Guardia (Ron Perlman), whose uncle has sent him to recover the device.

device built by a 16th-century alchemist. The Cronos Device grew out of del Toro's "fascination with the 13th-century mechanical dolls that were used in the courts of Europe to amuse the rich. I thought, 'Well, in the 16th century alchemy was already in its downfall: it was not prestigious to be an alchemist anymore; it was like being a hippie in the '90s. So I had this character have a second sort of day job as a watchmaker. Then I thought an insect would be a perfect vampire. Having such a strange metabolism, they can hibernate for years if necessary, with a very low rate of metabolic functions, and they have some similarity with the vampire in that some of them suck blood and are nocturnal. I thought it would be very interesting to have one as the heart of the machinery."

Another cliché the film turns on its head is that of the stereotypical foreign villains—who in this case are foreign by virtue of being Americans! This allows the incorporation of English dialogue in the otherwise Spanish-language film. Though this might help the crossover to English-speaking audiences, Del Toro's real motivation was to get revenge against the stereotypical depiction of foreigners in American films. "So many American horror films, like *ARACHNOPHOBIA*, deal with two or more Anglo adventurers going to Latin American or third world countries, where you have all these dirty people talking 'Si, señor' Spanish that is never correct and they are subtitled in correct English. Why can't we do the opposite? Also, I cannot conceive of those characters not being foreigners—with Dieter de la

Guardia living in this sterile environment almost like Howard Hughes and having his nephew Angel, who's almost this mafioso brute going after Jesus. If the characters were Mexicans, they would be living in a different type of house, and they would be much more direct: they would just go and shoot the guy to get the device, and that would be the end of it. They would not go into such a complicated scheme. Originally, we conceived the villains being Ron Perlman and Max Von Sydow, speaking German; unfortunately, we couldn't afford to pay for both foreign actors. So we got Claudio Brook, who is one of our very good Mexican actors, and he speaks almost accentless, so we said, 'Well, let's make them Americans.' That's great because the movie takes place in post-NAFTA Mexico, 1997, and I just want the villains to be foreigners speaking in subtitles."

Ironically, in order to increase marketability in many neighborhood Spanish-language theaters this side of the border, the film will also be released with the English dialogue dubbed out. "I went through casting here, and most of the voices were horrible. They are so used to dubbing any sort of film, so they just come in, do their job, and walk out. Ron and I were talking about who should do his voice, and he said, 'Why don't you?' So I'm Ron Perlman's voice in the dual version."

Although of course hopeful for the success of his movie on our side of the border, del Toro is not sure whether it will ignite cult interest along the lines of Hong Kong cinema. "The only major crossover Mexico has had in the last few years is

LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE, and I think people that liked that one will probably not like this one. But I think that we have peculiar points of view to offer into every subject that cinema touches. If we do a melodrama or a comedy, it would be non-American. I think this would be fun for an audience that wants to see someone make his own version of the vampire mythology. I'm just thrilled to know that some degree of success will come with the movie being shown here; it will find its audience, however big or small it is. I would love to know some Americans who said, 'You know, we like the point of view this guy has; we find it very interesting.'" □

Claudio Brook, star of Bunuel's *SIMON OF THE DESERT*, plays the ailing billionaire, Dieter de la Guardia, who knows the secret of the device.



## CINEMA

By Steve Biodrowski

## RECENT RELEASES

*Wenders close to brilliant, but no pity for SKINNER.*

FARAWAY, SO CLOSE! is Wim Wenders's sequel to his art house hit of a few years back, WINGS OF DESIRE, the story of an angel who falls to Earth—or rather falls in love with a trapeze artist and decides to become human. This time around, Wenders puts a new spin on the material by telling the story of a different angel who is tired of being a mere observer and wants to intervene in the affairs of humanity. Things don't go as well for him in his transition, and his brief time on Earth is marked by unhappiness and tragedy. Whereas the original was almost a pseudo-documentary on the state of mind of Berlin, the sequel is more tightly structured and plotted—one of the reasons it fell into disfavor with critics, especially in regards to its MISSION:IMPOSSIBLE-type caper near the conclusion. This criticism cannot be dismissed completely; on the other hand, this story is about intervention, not romantic love, and the point is that this angel discovers a far more unseemly side of earthly life than his predecessor. This time, the redemptive factor is not love but art, courtesy of Lou Reed, in a cameo, whose song lyric ("Why can't I be good?...Why can't I do what other men do?") becomes almost a mantra for this unfortunate angel, who nevertheless finally does get his wish. Altogether, a beautiful, moving film, even if not quite a match for its predecessor.

THE CROW made its way to the big screen, despite the unfortunate tragedy that took the life of its star, Brandon Lee. The residual impact of his death can be perceived in the



Weird and wacky, **SHRUNKEN HEADS** is the best film to emerge from Charles Band's Full Moon company since **THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM**.

truncated flashback scenes to Eric Draven's life with his fiance, Shelly. Director Alexander Proyas's overuse of montage effects betrays his MTV background. Not that there's anything wrong with flashy technique; it's just not always the best way to convey the sequence at hand. In the original comic, the point of this scene was that Eric, shot and left for dead, was actually watching the rape and murder of his fiance. ("Don't look!" the crow tells him.) The obvious way to stage this action was in an uninterrupted take from Eric's point-of-view, which would have worked dramatically and overcome the obvious hurdle the filmmakers faced. Apart from this and one or two other bungled moments (Eric's resurrection is notably unspectacular), the film is actually quite engrossing once its avenger gets down to business. The film conveys a magnificently weird sense of a vendetta from be-

yond the grave, with a vigilante protagonist even more twisted and morbid than the Dark Knight. Many of the action set pieces are pulled off with aplomb, and Michael Wincott makes an effective villain. Still, this is Lee's movie. It's impossible to watch the film without reading some connection between him and the character he played, but it's safe to say that, even without this unfortunate element, he physically embodied the character in a way that no one else could.

SHRUNKEN HEADS is a wacky little item from Richard Elfman (Danny's brother), who gave us the extremely weird midnight movie FORBIDDEN ZONE over a decade ago. Some of that cult sensibility remains, though now grafted onto more mainstream elements. Rather than diminishing the impact, this is actually an improvement, because the combination makes things seem so much stranger. Imagine a film about young boys (young enough to still read comics but old enough to be thinking about girls), and the opening half hour seems almost like a Disney film. When these innocent characters are then ruthlessly gunned down and later brought back to life as the title characters ("superheros from the neck up," according to the ad copy), well, the result is bizarre to say the least.

Another film that takes a bizarre turn, much less successfully, is NO ESCAPE (filmed as PRISON COLONY). For about five minutes, this looks like an interesting futuristic prison break-out movie along the lines of FORTRESS. Then suddenly the continuity starts falling to pieces and the film mutates into an

amalgam of PAPIILLON, THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME, and THE ROAD WARRIOR. Ridiculous amounts of violence are poured on, and things blow up real good. (This film has one of the loudest stereo mixes in recent memory, but even that can barely keep the audience awake.) Lead Ray Liotta does his best, playing what at first appears to be a near psychotic, homicidal sociopath, but in the end all the character's rough edges are sanded off and he turns out to be just another nice guy with an understandable chip on his shoulder. Producer Gale Ann Hurd should apologize for wasting so much good talent.

CABIN BOY sank without a trace, but it actually has some redeeming features. The production design and effects capture a nice comic-fantasy tone. Unlike many filmmakers, who seem to live under the delusion that obnoxiously self-centered characters are delightfully endearing, collaborators Chris Elliot and Adam Resnick realize that "fancy lad" Nathaniel deserves every humiliation heaped upon him, which they dish out with gleeful delight (at one point, after a particularly egregious mistake, he is literally forced to lick the deck clean).

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN is a mostly realistic drama, into which director Alex Cox inserts a brief supernatural element: the ghostly apparition of the protagonist's father arrives to berate his son for the path his life has taken. As with the radioactive car in REPO MAN, Cox weaves what could have been an extremely intrusive element into the otherwise straightforward story.

AMERICAN CYBORG should be applauded for a feat few low-budget sf efforts achieve these days: getting into theatres. Too bad it wasn't worth watching once you paid \$7 for your ticket. Lame premise has the world overrun with cyborgs, while humanity's fate rests on a woman trying to get the last remaining fetus to safety. For some reason, she is carrying her unborn child in a mechanical container, offering us numerous opportunities to peruse the unconvincing makeup. On her quest, she hooks up with Joe Lara, who helps her fight off the evil cyborg pursuing her before (surprise!) turning out to be a cyborg himself.

LEPRECHAUN 2 is another

After five-minutes establishing **NO ESCAPE** as a futuristic prison pic, Ray Liotta abruptly finds himself in a **ROAD WARRIOR** version of **PAPIILLON**.



## Dario: Yesterday & Today

misguided Trimark stab at a horror franchise. The film is extremely unfunny and wastes the potential of its title character. What should be brilliantly malevolent and mischievous prankster turns into a typical joke-spouting cinematic slasher. The boring human characters don't help much; thankfully, they're usually killed off before being around long enough to grow really grating.

SKINNER is the most reprehensible, vile piece of shit to back up in the cinematic sewer for some time. The self-proclaimed "film that picks up where SILENCE OF THE LAMBS left off" is predicated on the notion that seeing women skinned is entertaining, something that SILENCE wisely avoided. No talent director Ivan Nagy (enjoying his fifteen minutes of fame thanks to former girlfriend Heidi Fleis) has title character move into a town with a convenient prostitute waiting around each corner to be butchered. When sexism wears thin, racism kicks in, with Skinner killing a black man off-screen (on-screen violence for women only), in order to don his skin and launch into a shameless caricature, spouting lines like, "Mas'er's done sick the dawgs on me!" (Maybe NOW and NAACP should team up and kick the filmmakers' collective ass.) In one of many low points, a prostitute, thinking her "client" has a taste for bondage, eagerly ties herself to a bed, giving one time to think, "In old Traci Lords movies, the only bodily fluids to come would be semen, not blood. You'd have to be sick to consider this an improvement in respectability." And forget the hype about her "dramatic breakthrough." Her role is clearly tailored to hide her weaknesses: with face obscured by hat and hair, her natural inexpressiveness is supposed to work for the character, like the steely gaze of Charles Bronson when playing a Sergio Leone avenger. The attempt backfires, however, with laughable results, when she is forced to mouth lines like "I'm coming for you, Skinner!" while hobbling in pursuit of her quarry. (The limp is the role's only challenge, which defeats her completely.) To top it off, she fails in her pursuit (mostly because she rejects the help of two men—is there a message here?). This leaves Skinner promising a sequel because, "They love people like me." The mysterious "they" goes undefined. Presumably, the script meant to implicate its audience, but it's only the filmmakers themselves who love such characters—or, rather, love the money they hope to make from them. □

### TRAUMA

A World Vision Home Video Release, in association with Overseas Film Group of an A.D.C. Production. Directed by Dario Argento. Written by Argento and T.E.D. Klein. Photographed by Raffaele Mertes. Production Design by Billy Jet. Special Effects by Tom Savini. 102 minutes. Rated R.

Aura Petrescu.....Asla Argento  
David Parson.....Christopher Rydell  
Adriana Petrescu.....Piper Laurie  
Frederic Forrest.....Dr. Judd  
Brad Dourif.....Dr. Lloyd

by Steve Biodrowski

One of the perils of a doing advance previews pieces is, obviously, that one is covering films before they come out—often, in fact, before they are even completed. This occasionally leaves egg all over one's editorial face when a film that has been heavily hyped turns out to be a real dud. Such a case is Dario Argento's TRAUMA, which received a six-page spread in *IM 1:2*.

Even longtime Argento fans (of which I am one) have been forced to acknowledge this as one of his worst efforts. The story is only marginally interesting, and most of the good elements are mere weak echoes of motifs he has played with virtuoso skill in past films. Of course, story has never been Argento's strong suit, but with the talented T.E.D. Klein helping on script chores, one would expect better than this. ("I refuse to take full responsibility for that," Klein tells me. "There was three hours of plot in that script condensed down to two, and Dario insisted on the anorexia element, which I didn't think was interesting, but he thought he was making a statement.")

What is amazing, in a sad sort of way, is how visually dull the film is. Sequences which once would have knocked our collective eyeballs out of our heads now barely keep our eyelids open. As the film moves into its second half, it does finally work up some momentum, and even provides one or two jolts, but only the most ardent fan will be forgiving enough to sift for the meager gold amidst this mud.

Far more exciting for Argento fans is the opportunity to see his uncut TENEBRAE, now available on Japanese laserdisk. A mere ten years before TRAUMA, Argento was working at the absolute top of his form; this is the peak of his career, his best film and one of the best films of the horror genre.

TENEBRAE works on a sophisticated level somewhat different



Dario Argento on the set of his latest film, TRAUMA, a rehash of themes and ideas handled far better in the past efforts that established his reputation.

from more standard fare. Instead of building suspense through empathy with characters who are then placed in dangerous situations, Argento aims his horror directly at the audience. This self-reflexive masterpiece is frightening because it plays on our worst fears about the genre itself, telling us that violence in art does cause violence in real life, that fans of horror are themselves maniacs, and that practitioners of the form are effective at it precisely because they are as crazy as their fans.

Basically a subversive riff on the Hemingway notion that you can't write about a subject unless you have personal experience, TENEBRAE is about a book of the same title, written by Peter Neal (Anthony Franciosa), which a murderer is using as inspiration in order to purge society of its "deviants." At first, the plot follows a traditional form, with its clearly defined protagonist following clues to unravel the mys-

tery. Then Argento abruptly and quite intentionally begins blowing this structure to pieces, first by introducing an almost irrelevant set piece at the halfway point, then by pushing Neal himself offscreen, while other characters take over. By the conclusion, bodies are piling up, and audience identification is undermined with a twist ending worthy of PSYCHO. Amazingly, this insanity produces not an insane film but a brilliantly realized portrait of an insane world. Argento even quotes Sherlock Holmes, the ultimate example of intellect finding order in the chaos, only to deconstruct the whole foundation of the mystery genre, leaving nothing but chaos and despair. Even if Argento never scales this height again, his stature among great fright filmmakers is secure with this effort. □

Disappointed fans can take solace in the Japanese laserdisk release of Argento's masterpiece, TENEBRAE.



## Nick Park on Directing THE WRONG TROUSERS

By Steve Blodrowski

Wallace and Gromit, the delightful characters whose *THE WRONG TROUSERS* just won an Academy Award in the animated short category, began their career modestly enough, in a sketchbook director Nick Park kept in art school. "At one point, I was thinking of a book that would be illustrated for kids, and I had these two characters, though originally Gromit was a cat," Park recalls. "Later on, at National Film School in London, I needed a couple of characters for my graduation film, so I went back to my old sketchbook, found these two, and changed Gromit to a dog. They were just fit into the story, basically."

The film was *A GRAND DAY OUT*, in which Wallace and Gromit run out of cheese and hit on the idea of going to the moon to replenish their supply. Park worked on the film for several years before hooking up with Aardman Animations, who offered to help him finish it while he worked on other projects for them. "I was working on it single-handedly, because it was quite low-budget, so I couldn't really pay people properly to help. Then Aardman gave me part time employment and helped



The animated comedy team of Wallace and Gromit poses on the set of their latest winner, *THE WRONG TROUSERS*.

me finish it."

The film justified the six years of effort by earning an Academy Award nomination. It also established the trademark Nick Park style of wide-mouthed, toothy characters speaking in amusingly exaggerated lip-sync. "Partly, I wanted to make my mark," Park admits. "But the biggest catalyst was Wallace's accent after I recorded the voice with Peter Sallis. He puts on this Northern accent, which really stretches the vowels. I let that dictate to me. I animated a little dialogue in *GRAND DAY OUT*, and it was a bit subtle. So on the next take, I thought, 'Just go for it.' I thought [the approach] was just for Wallace.

When it came to *CREATURE COMFORTS*, I thought it would be a more natural style, but as soon as we came to designing and animating the animals, I just found I liked that approach too much to get away from it."

*CREATURE COMFORTS*, which employed Aardman's innovative technique of creating "documentary" animation by lip-syncing puppets to taped interviews, won Park his first Oscar. After this success, he and Aardman returned to Wallace and Gromit with a bigger budget and greater ambition. Whereas *A GRAND DAY OUT* suggested the simple structure of Melies' *A TRIP TO THE MOON*, the new effort is a plot-driven thriller. "A *GRAND DAY OUT* was very much a linear story, which works well with very young kids—they can grasp it easily," he explains. "With the next film, I felt like more of a filmmaker than an animator, and I was more ambitious to do something with more plot. With a bigger financial commitment, we all wanted to see something stronger come out of this, something pushed forward in terms of storytelling. We put more effort up front into that, about six months of writing. We went to a writer named Bob Baker, who's done ten years of *DR. WHO*.

Despite the overt Hitchcockian influence, the title is not an intentional play on *THE WRONG MAN*. "I didn't know there was a film called that," says Park. "It's funny, because I'm into Hitchcock films very much. I was aiming to get something of a B-movie thriller feel to it, like *THE THIRD MAN*. That's not exactly a B-movie, but I love

that sort of title."

Feathers McGraw, the felonious villain of the piece, also goes back to Park's art school sketchbook. "I had this idea of a bunch of penguins coming to stay with Wallace and Gromit; then I wanted to strip that idea down to one penguin and use it as the basis for this new story. At first, he was going to get up a lot of mischief and get on Gromit's nerves, basically. Then somebody said, 'Why not make him a kind of hardened criminal living undercover?' That fit in with the Hitchcock idea—the kind of strange lodger who comes and goes without saying anything, and you wonder what he's up to. That element started to come out and form the story.

"I just wanted a villain that was the most unlikely," Park continues. "There's something about Wallace and Gromit that goes back to the English tradition like the Ealing comedies. That's a feeling I tried to capture—that there's something just quirky about the story. I tried to inject unlikely things into the story, like the *Techno Trousers* and the penguin, always having a twist so that nothing's predictable. Whenever the story is doing what you think it should, then don't do it; take it somewhere else. Don't let anyone have quite what they're expecting."

In keeping with the Hitchcock tradition, Park presents two marvelous, visual set pieces, so brilliant in their execution that they almost justify themselves quite apart from how they fit into the story. The first is the sequence wherein the penguin uses Wallace, in the *TECHNO TROUSERS* steal

Nick Park animates a scene of Wallace, trapped in the *Techno-Trousers* which run out of control, taking him on a madcap race along the street.





an uproarious chase atop a model train. "I tend to be more visually led, and I just loved the way the penguin fit onto the train. In fact that whole sequence was a kind of set piece we had on the shelf which might have been used in the plot and might not, because I had many different ideas."

Needless to say, after their current success, Wallace and Gromit will continue their adventures. "We are talking about some of the ways it might go. We have a lot of interest in doing more films; I feel the iron's hot and ready to strike. We're talking about a longer film at the moment, though what the actual length would be we don't quite know. It could be a 50-minute TV movie or even something longer. We're working on a script with Bob Baker again, a 75-minute story that we may very well condense down. We think we probably could get the feature film money for it, but it's a matter of: the more money there is, the more commercial pressure there is, and with these two characters I think they've got to be handled sensitively, not driven by people in suits saying what they should be doing and what kind of market they've got to appeal to, because I think it would destroy them." □



Wallace and Gromit began their adventures with a trip to the moon, in **A GRAND DAY OUT**.



## Oscar-winning Claymation Masterpiece

### WRONG TROUSERS

An Aardman Animations Production in association with Wallace & Gromit Ltd. and BBC Enterprises. Directed by Nick Park. Produced by Christopher Moll. Executive producers Peter Lord & David Sproxton. Executive producers for the BBC, Colin Rose & Peter Salmon. Animation by Nick Park & Steve Box. Art director, Yvonne Fox. Optical effects supervisor, Peter Wignall. Production manager, Pete Thornton. Music by Julian Nott. Editor, Helen Garrard. Photography, Tristram Oliver & Dave Alex Riddett. Written by Nick Park & Bob Baker with additional contributions by Brian Sibley, based upon characters created by Nick Park.

Voice of Wallace.....Peter Sallis

### By Steve Biodrowski

In recent years, there have been so many failed attempts at creating Hitchcockian suspense, that the task has begun to seem almost impossible. For example, when Kenneth Branagh made **DEAD AGAIN**, all his Shakespearean skills could not hide the fact that he did not possess the essential cinematic craft necessary to pull off that kind of thriller. But now, out of the most unexpected of places, comes proof that the elusive grail is within our grasp.

The animated short **THE WRONG TROUSERS** takes Wallace and Gromit, the delightfully daffy duo from **GRAND DAY OUT**, and places them within a mystery-thriller scenario. The effect, of course, is parody, but like the best parody, this humor derives from the fact that what we are watching is in many way indistinguishable from the real thing. Ignore for a moment that what we are watching are lumps of clay. The techniques—camera placement and movement, editing, and lighting—are as carefully employed as in any live-action film.

The film begins with a disarmingly amusing episode regarding Gromit's birthday, which he thinks Wallace has forgotten. The tone shifts in a subtle way, however, when they take in a border: an obsequious penguin, who soon seems to be taking Gromit's place. The situation is ripe for comedy, which director-animator Nick Park exploits fully, but along the way we gradually find that the mysterious penguin has a hidden agenda: to wit, heisting a diamond with the aid of Gromit's birthday present ("Techno Trousers...ex-NASA...great for walkies.")

Everything about this film is perfect, from the broad comic strokes to the subtle nuances of the characters' expressions. Even



The felonious penguin, **Feathers McGraw**, gets the drop on our heroes; where he could have been packing a magnum is anyone's guess.

elements which could have been weaknesses are turned around into strengths. For instance, the silent penguin (only Wallace speaks) has virtually no expressive capabilities except for his blinking eyes, but this only adds to his enigmatic nature, as the Bernard Hermandesque score underlines every gesture with menace.

The film is filled with so much detail and cleverness that multiple viewings are almost essential. Park pulls some effective cinematic "cheats," such as having Wallace back into an empty doorway, then stepping aside to reveal the penguin, who has suddenly appeared out of nowhere. The effectiveness of the character's surprise appearance is only augmented by seeing how Park pulled a fast one on us.

Make no mistake: this film is a humorous takeoff on the theme, but Park is confident enough in his abilities to go for extended visual sequences of the jewel heist, with only minor comic touches. This is so well done that, on first viewing, one would assume it to be the highlight of the film. Then Park audaciously tops it with the climactic model train chase—quite an impressive coup. Like many great set pieces (the train chase in Hitchcock's **NUMBER 17** comes to mind), this later scene is barely justified by the story. (Gromit could have simply conked the villain on the head with his rolling pin, but in a deliciously absurd sight gag the penguin pulls out a gun. Where the hell was this suit-

less penguin packing a rod?) But the visual impact of the scene is so great that it truly justifies its own existence.

If all this sounds a tad heavy-handed for a review of an animated film, let me acknowledge that **THE WRONG TROUSERS** is good exuberant fun. The storytelling is brisk enough to hold the attention of youngsters, but most of the references and inside jokes are clearly intended for an older audience. In its own way, despite the claymation which would seem to indicate a kiddie format, this is an ambitious undertaking which uses the cinematic form to its fullest extent. Shot for shot there is more style here than in a dozen live-action features—style that is enjoyable both for its own sake and for effectively enhancing the storytelling. □

Disguised as a chicken (note the rubber glove), McGraw carries out his diamond theft.



## FILM RATINGS

- Catch it opening night
- Worth seeing first run
- Wait for second-run
- Wait for video/cable
- Fodder for MST-3K

## DARK UNIVERSE

Director: Steve Latahaw. Writer: Pat Moran. Prism Video, 82 mins, NC-17. With: Blake Pickett, Cherie Scott.

This is an unofficial remake of *THE CREEPING UNKNOWN* (1956), with a story idea co-credited to Fred Olen Ray. An entrepreneur (Joe Estevez, Martin Sheen's sound-alike brother) launches a private space shuttle, but upon re-entry it is attacked by extraterrestrial spores which mutate the astronaut (Steve Barkett). Shuttle crashes in Florida swampland, and a search party is picked off by the ALIEN-inspired creature, which is anemic and seeks to ingest human blood.

Every character has a bad attitude, and spending time listening to them trade insults grows old very fast. There are a couple of morphing effects which are superior to the on-set monster costume (by S.O.T.A.), which is laughably bad. Coupled with trite dialogue and unoriginal plot, this could have been a funny movie, but no such luck. Cast members thriftily served double duty behind the scenes as well. Despite misleading rating, the effects show signs of having been chopped. ○ Judith Harris

## COLD SWEAT

Director: Gail Harvey. Writer: Richard Beattie. Paramount Home Video, 93 mins, R. With: Ben Cross, Adam Baldwin, Shannon Tweed, Dave Thomas.

Double crosses abound in this direct-to-video erotic thriller

## MAGNUM FORCE Meets THE HOWLING: Anthony Hickox directs FULL ECLIPSE.



**BLOOD TIES:** Sultry "Carpathian" Michelle Johnson faces death at the hands of Bo Hopkins' fanatical vampire hunter.

with a supernatural twist. Cross plays a hired assassin who carries out a contract but then must kill innocent bystander Catherine Wicker (Lenore Zann). Her death profoundly affects him, and he soon finds himself haunted by her ghost.

Reluctantly, Cross accepts another assignment. Catherine's spirit has the unpleasant habit of popping up at the wrong time for Cross, and the guilt prevents him from making love to his wife. The ghost's vengeful nature takes a strange twist, and a bizarre relationship develops between her and Cross. They almost become lovers except for one small detail: she's dead. This offbeat love affair makes *COLD SWEAT* one of the more interesting entries in the burgeoning genre.

●● Dan Scapperotti

## FULL ECLIPSE

Director: Anthony Hickox. Writers: Richard Christian Matheson and Michael Reaves. HBO, 97 mins, R. With: Mario Van Peebles, Patsy Kensit, Paul Marshall, Scott Paulin.

This is a ludicrous made-for-TV movie about vigilante werewolf cops. Their lycanthropy is chemically induced and results in their teeth lengthening and laughable claws growing from their knuckles. A beneficial side effect is that their wounds heal instantly. All this is not revealed for about an hour, after a lot of dull police chases, gun fights, and angst over being a good cop in bad L.A.

Major revelation, late in running time, is that the chemical which makes these cops into superior animals is extracted directly from the brain of the leader (Bruce Payne), who is a "real" werewolf, appearing as such for a brief, anticlimactic dockyard fight. Makeup by Alterian Studios is nothing special, but overuse of closeups is

intrusive and annoying.

○ Judith Harris

## BLOOD TIES

Director: Jim McBride. Writer: Richard Shapiro. New Horizons Video, 83 mins. With: Patrick Bachau, Bo Hopkins, Michelle Johnson.

A 1991 backdoor pilot that never sold, this video release is supposedly a "director's cut," containing a few fleeting images of blood that earn the R-rating. The film is an intelligent new take on vampires, here portrayed as an immigrant ethnic group who call themselves "Carpathians."

GODFATHER-style gatherings of family elders are interspersed with the younger generation, who prefer being a motorcycle gang—a surprisingly effective hybrid of two genres. The plot is fueled by the witch-hunting Southern Coalition Against Vampires, while the sympathetic protagonist (Harley Venton) tries to convince his relatives to give up their preda-

**MIDNIGHT KISS, another recent video vampire release, serves up bad jokes and an anemic batch of the usual genre cliches.**



tory private justice and rely on the law to protect them, just like any other American citizens—an attitude which gets him branded as a "damned assimilationist" by Bachau's morally shady character.

The only weakness is the ending. Although the immediate problem is resolved, so much is left open for the series that never followed, leaving eager viewers wanting more that will, alas, never come.

●●● Jay Stevenson

## MIDNIGHT KISS

Director: Joel Bender. Writers: John Weldner & Ken Lamplugh. Academy Home Video, 90 mins, R. With: Michelle Owens, Michael McMillen.

The premise of this anemic vampire tale is that a handsome young blood-sucker dons three piece Brooks Brothers suits, milk man uniforms, or even a priest's attire and spouts lines like "Time for a bite" or "Lets do lunch" before chowing down on his exclusively female menu. A troubled female cop tries to take him on but winds up being bitten first, and must wrestle with her own vampire conversion, while trying to capture the marauding vampire

The film threatens to actually become interesting when dealing with this sub-plot. Owens is effective in the battle against the transformation, and a scene wherein she succumbs to her growing hunger and pursues her pet cat through the apartment is pretty eerie. But, nothing else in the film works, and it can't even be true to its own concepts. The vampire is barely phased by a shotgun blast in one scene, but a punch knocks him down in another, and an earring torn from his ear brings him agonizing pain.

The film is flatly lit, and directed with the panache of a used car commercial. Dialogue is terrible, but the cast, except for Owens, is so bad, it really doesn't

matter. Glimpses of theatre marquees during one scene let us know that this one has been on the shelves a couple of years. How sad to think that someone felt compelled to take it off.

What hast Freddie wrought? First a wise-cracking child molester, now a vampire with a penchant for costumes and one liners. What's next? Maybe *CATSKILLS PARK*, with giant prehistoric Jewish comics pursuing Andrew Dice Clay and Elayne Boosler. God, but I liked it better when monsters were just scary and didn't have a gag writer.

● John Thonen

## THE LOST WORLD

Restored by Jamie White and Scott MacQueen. A Lumnivision Laserdisk Release, 90 mins. With: Wallace Beery, "Bull" Montana.

It is only because of the true dedication of men like Kevin Brownlow, William K. Everson, George Turner, Ronald Haver, (who restored *A STAR IS BORN*), and Robert A. Harris (who performed a similar service for *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*) that some of our greatest treasures—motion pictures—have been preserved. Let us add two other names to the growing list: Jamie White and Scott MacQueen.

These two gentlemen, working through the courtesy of the George Eastman House of New York and Lumnivision of Denver, Colorado, have restored (as much as could be found) and released the Willis H. O'Brien 1925 silent classic *THE LOST WORLD* (LVD 9109).

The silent film medium, for the most part, had been shown for years in murky, often tattered prints, void of music or colour tinting. White and MacQueen have released a product using the finest 16mm and 35mm materials available from the surviving film elements. Originally running at 106 minutes, only an abridged 90 minute version exists today.

The Lumnivision disc is an excellent pressing, offering great clarity for the film's visuals. *THE LOST WORLD* has been properly retinted for this release (as it was when first shown in theatres), and the audio, in digital stereo, is a delight.

The soundtrack is divided, with music on the analog track while music and sound effects are on the digital track. Quite a choice! The film is in both CLV (Side One) and CAV (Side Two) which offers freeze frame and slow image.

After the film's conclusion, we are given a special treat of rich supplemental material: the original trailer, the original opening credits, a promotion *LOST WORLD* film, and abridged versions of Willis O'Brien's Edison shorts: *PREHISTORIC POULTRY* (1917), *RFD 10,000 B.C.* (1917) and *DI-*

NOSAUR AND THE MISSING LINK (1917). Extensive notes by Mr. MacQueen are also included. This is a disc worth having and a fine salute to those who were involved in this project.

●●●● Richard A. Ekstedt

## THE 24TH INTERNATIONAL TOURNEY OF ANIMATION

Directors: various, including Phil Tippett, Paul Berry & Will Vinton. Presented by the Samuel Goldwyn Co.

An extremely high percentage of winners make this an excellent compilation for animation fans in general. Those with a taste for genre material will also be pleased by several outstanding entries. GAHAN WILSON'S DINER fleshes out the cartoonist's one-panel gag style into a delightfully bizarre vignette. Phil Tippett's PREHISTORIC BEAST shows that the art of stop-motion animation may not be dead after all. This brief episode in the unfortunate life of a plant eating dinosaur who wanders too far from his heard, benefits from having no human characters; in this context, the well-done model work now looks merely stylized rather than outdated to modern eyes accustomed to the computer graphics of JURASSIC PARK. SANDMAN, from Paul Berry, one of the chief animators on THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS, shows the Tim Burton influence to terrifying effect. This short has won universal—and well-deserved—accolades. However, I will offer one slight objection, in that the payoff abruptly lurches away from the well established fairy tale atmosphere into Grand Guignol gruesomeness, avoiding the kind of resolution that Bruno Bettelheim defined as essential to this kind of tale in *The Uses of Enchantment: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. This is definitely not one for the kids. The evening's entertainment ends with a fun-filled selection of some of Will Vinton's best and most famous work, including a long episode featuring the adventures of a character aptly identified as Mr. Resister, a walking electrical component who manages to be surprisingly endearing for someone without a face or dialogue.

●●●● Jay Stevenson

Paul Berry's THE SANDMAN is one highlight of the Tourney of Animation.



## ANIMAE by Todd French

In 1972, when Japanimation appeared trapped in a Moebius loop of mecha suits and space operas, an interesting anomaly called DEVILMAN debuted as a TV series. Based on the original (and much darker) grue manga of horror/sci-fi illustrator Go Nagai (MAZINGER Z), DEVILMAN was sanitized into a kind of weird Lovecraftian superhero, even enabling the kiddies to join in sing-along combat choruses of "Devil wing... Devil kick... Devil chop!". Despite this admittedly juvenile pitch, DEVILMAN was a groundbreaking departure from Japanimation's run-of-the-mill giant robot pap, and a precursor to such adult anime horror faves as UROTSUKI DOJI, VIOLENCE JACK (also by Nagai), WICKED CITY, and VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU, among others.

Returning to Nagai's far grislier source material, the 55-minute 1987 Kodansha-King video release (co-scripted by Nagai and director Tsutomu Lida), DEVILMAN: THE BIRTH OF DEVILMAN, is kinetic, bloody, demon-bashing fun. As in many of Japan's nihilistic monster-mashes, DEVILMAN cannily scores points even when it's high on the energy of its goth-splatter cel images; it's as much preoccupied with the thin (often obliterated) line between over-man and under-beast, as it is with flying parts and plasma. Unlike our own relegation of the art to sun-dappled Uncle Walt concerns, Japanimation meisters have never had qualms in giving us unpleasant protagonists in pitch-black 'toons that never end happily ever after for anyone. Part of the perverse joy of watching DEVILMAN stems from an awareness of its inherent cruelty and rejection of western expectations of comic-hero conduct; there is an intentional nastiness to its pulp thrills that western buffs may find disturbing beyond belief. The OVA is set mostly in contemporary Japan, where simon-pure school boy Akira Fudo is enlisted by best friend Ryo Asuka in a scheme to quash an imminent demonic invasion. It seems that, before the advent of man, demon zoku (tribes) ruled the world and, since being expelled, have become ravaging, shape-shifting monsters bent on enslaving mankind. Ryo's novel plan is

## DEVILMAN

*The Revamped Animated Anti-Hero.*



The 1987 OVA of DEVILMAN abandons the kiddie antics of the '70s TV series in favor of the far grislier tone of the original manga.

to invite possession and in turn possess a demon and use his powers against his own hellish brethren. Since only "one who loves justice" can do this, good guy Akira links up with arch-demon Amon, becoming "Devilman," mankind's monstrous, carnage-dealing savior.

As is a staple of Japanese "grotesque" anime, DEVILMAN'S sheer visual imagination stunningly outweighs the sometimes prosaic subtitles. Nagai and Lida's designs are the rubber-appendaged pals you wished you owned as a kid. A stilt-legged spider-cyclops is a hoot, and Devilman himself is engifted with an amusing visual conceit: Amon's bat-winged coiffure and horns are an exact copy of BATMAN's "bat-signal." The OVA boasts two sequences that will have Nippon monster addicts in seventh-heaven: one in which Akira has a vision of a prolonged elder earth demon-dino rub-out; the other being the gore-hound's finale in which Devilman turns a demonic convention into an Oingo Boingo song: in other words, everyone "leaves their body at the door."

However, where DEVILMAN truly shines is in its dark anime tradition of portraying 'toon heroes whose ruthlessness and savagery

is only slightly milder than that of the creatures they seek to eradicate. Given a grasp of Nagai's—and Japanimation's—often downbeat approach, it makes sense when Ryo, hoping to lure Amon into a crucial possession ceremony, provides bait by maniacally slashing hopeful possessors with a broken wine bottle. Witness the singularly avid expressions on the faces of Akira and Ryo as they take a lift down to certain negation of their humanity. Japanese horror manga and anime are peopled with gray gods and dehumanized avengers. It's hardly surprising when UROTSUKI DOJI's "god-of-all-gods" turns out to be an Id-driven destroyer of worlds; or when the heroine of VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU is merely competing with another revenant for the affections of a mannequin-pretty youth (he faces living death either way); or when kindly Akira realizes that, in order to conquer evil, he must become "a monster among monsters."

In spite of a few risible snatches of dialogue ("Is this the gentle, sensitive Akira I once knew?" asks Ryo while his former friend goes on an orgiastic, demon-killing binge), and some plotting gaffes (Akira and Ryo make two trips to a monster-mense), Lida and Nagai provide an exciting first chapter in what will hopefully be an on-going OVA series. (A second episode, revolving around Devilman's battle with his sister, the Siren Monster, is even better than this installment.) Any western audience response is sure to hinge on reaction to the limited animation, rather than the Disney/Bluthian fluidity that animation buffs have come to expect (characters are still flat, with the usual "big-eyed" Asian garnish). Remarkably shorn of the genre's withering misogyny, DEVILMAN may not have the indelible exotica of UROTSUKI DOJI, but it's the hallowed forerunner that made the genre's success possible.

Considering the debt that Japan's grotesque anime field owes Nagai, it's nice to see his seminal creation given the revamp job it deserves. And not a single chorus of "Devil chop" or "Devil kick" to be heard. □

## NOSTALGIA by Steven Jay Rubin

## SATURDAY MATINEES AT THE STADIUM This Week's Feature: *THEM!*

What was your favorite movie theatre when you were growing up? Mine was the Stadium on Pico Boulevard in West Los Angeles, an old Fox West Coast Theatre, only a mile from the 20th Century-Fox studios. I'm not sure why it was called the Stadium. By the time I arrived from Chicago, the closest stadium was Gilmore Field, home of the Hollywood All-Stars minor league baseball franchise, five miles away.

Today, the theatre building remains, but inside you will find a place of worship. Ironically, it was once my place of worship, too. From about 1957 to the day the Stadium closed its doors, I was a Saturday morning fixture at the weekly "kiddie matinee," where 35-cent admission got me two movies, coming attractions, and at least one cartoon. It was the very center of my pre-teen social life, where my friends and I met on weekends and learned about life beyond West Los Angeles, where we learned how to deal with our first real fears of the unknown.

WW II, lovers' lane (yuck!), monsters, ghouls and magic. Most of the time, I was scared out of my pants. As an only child of six, I already had an active imagination, but watching a film like *THE BRAIN FROM PLANET AROUS* took me right over the edge. And forget horror films—after two minutes of *HORRORS FROM THE BLACK MUSEUM*, I was in the lobby.

One of my first and most vivid memories of that period is *THEM!*, the giant ant movie that had been released in the summer of 1954. Since



Searching for giant ants, FBI agent Graham (James Arness, second from left) grills a woman, while James Whitmore (seated at right) watches.

that venerable classic turns 40 this year, it seems an appropriate feature for my first column, which I hope will rekindle a thousand movie memories from the '50s and '60s, when flying saucers were young and refreshments were cheap.

*THEM!* was the first giant mutation movie. Though based on a short story by George Worthing Yates, it was very much the product of screenwriter Ted Sherdeman's imagination. A Lieutenant Colonel in the Pacific during World War II, Sherdeman told me that when America dropped the A-bomb on Japan, he sat down by the side of a road and threw up. No fan of the atomic age, he offered a grim warning about what we might expect from toying with Mother Nature. He was also a good writer, and *THEM!*'s strength lies in its detec-

tive-story plot.

Reexamining the film years later, I find that it still works. It has a documentary-like flavor, the same approach that clicks in *WAR OF THE WORLDS* and *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*. As fantastic as the story becomes, it unfolds with a series of realistic vignettes. For a Los Angeles resident, it was also a bit close to home watching giant ants burrow into the storm drains under the city. And the ants for my money were pretty realistic. Even today, fans point to the movie as being one of the few wherein live-action giant models work.

I recently called Fess Parker (now a resort owner in Santa Barbara, California) and asked him about *THEM!*. Even though his part as Crotty, the wacko airplane pilot, was small (he's listed 23rd on the minor cast list, two places below Leonard Nimoy who played an Air Force Sergeant), he has very fond memories of the film.

"It was the first time my name was ever mentioned in a *New York Times* review," he laughs. "I normally didn't like to do day bits on a film, but the casting guy at Warners told me it would be a good part, and he was right. I remember they started with me in the morning and I was through by lunch."

Parker's bit was seen by Walt Disney, who was looking for an actor to play Davy Crockett, and the rest is film history. Parker also remembers that the lovely Joan Weldon, who played Dr. Patricia Medford, was a great singer, and the two of them hooked up 20 years later for a 20th

anniversary tour of *Oklahoma*.

Weldon, currently a New York resident, has kaleidoscopic memories of *THEM!*—most of them horrid. A contract actress at Warners (who had changed her name from Welton), Joan found herself filming in the 115-degree heat of the Mojave Desert, wearing a tweed suit. "I was never so hot in my life," she laughs. "And then we went into the L.A. storm drains where it was absolutely freezing!" Her scream upon seeing the giant ant was dubbed. "Screaming would have definitely hurt my [singing] voice," she admits. Weldon also remembers that actor Onslow Stevens, who played Major Kibbee, was a chronic sleepwalker who slept in the nude because it was so hot. "We were staying at this *PSYCHO*-motel where there weren't any locks on the doors, but after awhile, we just got used to pointing Onslow back to his room." After *THEM!* Weldon became a hard-working and quite respected stage actress, using her soprano voice in dozens of touring musicals.

Sherdeman lost his producing credit on *THEM!* when he insisted on hiring Edmund Gwenn as Dr. Harold Medford, the ant specialist. Studio head Jack Warner thought Gwenn was too old and replaced Sherdeman with producer David Weisbart, who nonetheless kept Gwenn.

James Whitmore, nominated for a supporting Oscar for *BATTLEGROUND* in 1949, was borrowed from MGM, where he had been playing Spencer Tracy-type roles. His stalwart Sergeant Ben Peterson is the heart of the film. After Dr. Medford confirms that the ants' underground lair is held together with saliva, Whitmore utters one of the film's best lines while wandering through the terrifying tunnels: "Spit's the only thing holding me together right now."

James Arness, soon to be TV's Matt Dillon in *GUNSMOKE*, was cast as FBI man Robert Graham. Arness was so tall that his dialogue sequences with Gwenn in the desert forced the company to dig trenches in which Arness walked.

Director Gordon Douglas told me in 1974 that color photography was planned until Warners slashed the budget. Despite the studio's misgivings, *THEM!* was their most successful film that year. □

Pow-wow on the desert location of *THEM!*, left to right: James Whitmore, Edmund Gwenn, Joan Weldon, director Gordon Douglas, James Arness.



## THE CROW

continued from page 13

work actually commenced within a week. (Such urgency is hardly atypical under the circumstances, when insurance and completion bond companies prefer to have the film completed rather than to pay off on expensive policies.) Pressman was reported as saying that "Brandon's work was essentially done on the film." The unfinished week of shooting involved mostly flashbacks of the Crow's normal life, before the murder. These scenes were either redesigned or dropped, with the result that Eric's relationship with his fiancée receives much less attention than in the comic book and his murder has been rendered in an unavoidably incomprehensible montage, one of the most obvious tell-tale signs of the behind-the-scenes tragedy. □

## DONALD JACKSON

continued from page 45

then 21-year-old executive producer Tanya York, who worked as an assistant on ROLLERBLADE WARRIORS and has since set up her own production and distribution company, York Home Video, whose first film was DEADLY AVENGER, starring Jan Michael Vincent and Erik Estrada.

Shot on a whirlwind 13-day schedule, the sequel had to make do with only one-fifth of the original's \$1.5 million budget. "Even though the budget is smaller, it's five times the movie than the first one is," insists Jackson. "Everything about it is so much better: the art department, the production design. On the first one, I got stuck with an art director who was an architectural draftsman who didn't understand my concepts and refused to cooperate. I didn't have any control over the way things looked. It was a constant fight."

Since then, Jackson has expanded the ROLLERBLADE saga beyond the envisioned trilogy into a tetralogy, with THE ROLLERBLADE SEVEN and RETURN OF THE ROLLERBLADE 7. "Those two ROLLERBLADE movies were deliberately offbeat, strange art films," says Jackson. "They were almost experimental movies, like a throwback to my days in the Ann Arbor Film Festival, which was the only place you could see all these great images before MTV. I wanted to make something very freeform—almost my mystical version of the ROLLERBLADE WARRIORS. I wanted to get it out of my system!" For television, the two films were condensed into one by Tanya York—a version which Jackson disowns. Yet another installment, entitled BRIDGET HOT BLADES, is currently in development.

Jackson's latest genre entry,

which he describes as "MY DINER WITH ANDRE in Hell," is titled THE DEVIL'S PET (in order to capitalize on co-star Julie Strain's title as 1993 *Penthouse* Playmate of the Year). Known variously as LAST IMPRESSIONS and MASTERS OF HORROR during production, the film stars Gino Dante and TAXI's Jeff Conaway as two low-life horror movie directors discussing a collaboration called SATAN CLAUS. "The idea," explains Jackson, "was that the people getting noticed nowadays are the ones who do things on an ultra-low budget and manage to get in theatres. We decided to make a movie in less than a week that is strange and interesting, shot in 35mm to get into film festivals and art houses."

Giving new meaning to the term "development hell," the restaurant in which the directors are dining is now supposed to be Hell, though the location is never explicitly specified. This strategy allows for a certain satirical take on Hollywood, as Jeff Conaway explains, "It was a chance to make a few comments about people in the movie industry—the monsters they can be, I think people can be desensitized to the real life and start to think show business is the center of the universe. That happens in any business: the people at the top become gods. This character definitely thinks he's some kind of god—above the law, morals and ethics."

The film was somewhat atypical for Jackson in that it involved little of the "resistance," "struggles," and "up-hill battles" associated with most of his low-budget efforts. Despite the relatively painless production, the end result seems to have gone the route of his other efforts, missing its targeted art house audience and heading instead directly to the video stores.

Despite this setback, Jackson continues to keep his head above water in an industry that has drowned so many others, seeking financing for projects like CYBERPUNK ZERO (which he describes as "TERMINATOR Meets TOMBSTONE"), which are designed to give a creative twist on a proven critical and/or boxoffice draw in an effort to duplicate the success of a Steven Soderbergh, a John McNaughton, a Louis Malle or even the Coen brothers. Such a path often leads to respectability, easier financing better projects and better budgets. Sometimes it's a matter of perseverance as much as talent until something clicks. With experience, Jackson has improved as a filmmaker and his key asset, apart from a list of credits, is that he has been able to remain a player in the game, providing nudity and low-budget thrills and chills to connoisseurs of offbeat cinema. □

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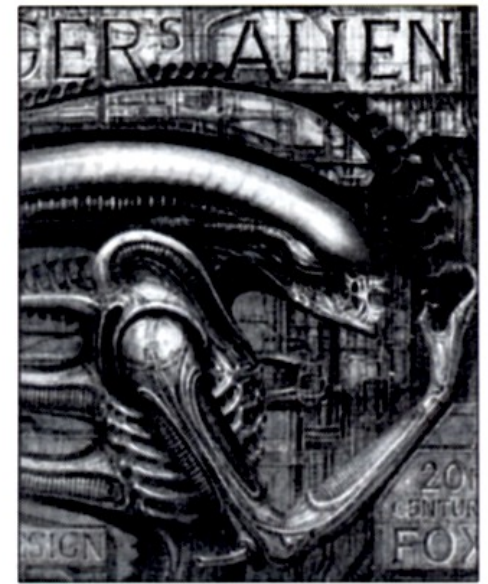
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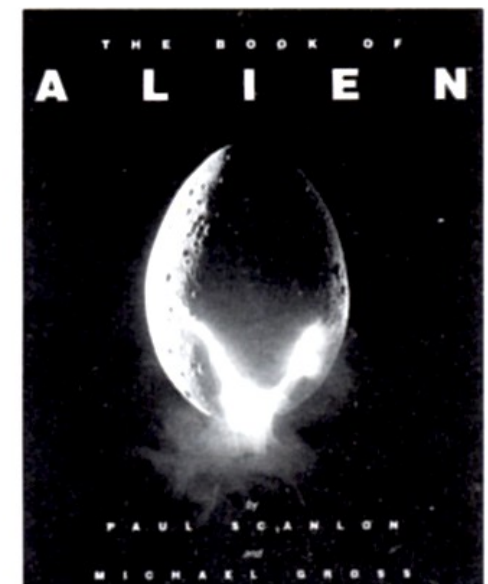
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# LETTERS

## RAVING ABOUT RETURN

I am writing to give you my thoughts about RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III. After reading in *IM* #1:2 that this movie would be released on Halloween weekend of 1993, I counted the days. From your articles, I knew it had the potential to be one of the best ever. It was finally released February 25 but only in two theaters in all of Dallas, Texas. Nevertheless, I took off work early to see it, and I was completely blown away.

This flick is one of the few things I have ever seen in my life that is perfection. (I am 31 years old, and the things I would call perfect I can count on one hand.). I had to go back and see it again the next day and the next. The next Friday I was looking forward to seeing it again, but to my surprise, it was no longer showing. I have never seen a movie only run one week. These idiots apparently have their head where the sun does not shine.

This movie had it all: kick-ass acting (by unknown actors, which makes it more impressive); kick-ass script (which in itself is very rare); and kick-ass effects (especially impressive on a \$2 million budget). In comparison, I would say this movie was better than TERMINATOR 2, with a \$100 million budget. I cannot say enough about Mindy Clarke to do justice to the job she did—it was beyond words. Her makeup and acting were killer. Therefore, I now have to count the days until it comes out on tape. All in all, I cannot praise this gem enough. RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III is spec-fucking-tacular.

Dean Turner  
Midlothian, TX

## CORRECTION BOX

Great job on Issue 1:2. Number 1:3 looks to be equally good. Well, you did have one error. In the Brad Dourif article, the WILD PALMS character he played was named Chickie Levitt, not Chicky Stein.

John Ian Sharpe  
Colton, CA

## STEELE CRAZY

The *Imagi-Movies* 1:3 "Letters" column included an intelligent missive from *Necrofile* co-editor Michael A. Morrison. *Necrofile* is a superior scholarly journal published under the tutelage of Stefan Dziemianowicz, and is recommended reading for every serious student of con-

temporary horror fiction.

The Barbara Steele essay-interview (*IM* 1:2 & 1:3) provided an excellent profile of the aptly titled "Queen of Horror." Only the venerable Fay Wray has comparable stature in the annals of fantastic film females. The beautiful actress is a bona fide cult figure. Her dark sensuality and screen presence are mesmerizing. Yet the image projected in the interview is that of a modest, almost self-effacing actress. Steele's varied and unique body of work, the result of astute selections with a touch of serendipity, includes several classics. BLACK SUNDAY alone assures her permanent status as a revered genre figure. Look at some of the formidable filmmakers in her past: Bava, Fellini, Corman, Mike Reeves, Cronenberg, Demme, Dante, Curtis. What an illustrious cast of talented auteurs and cult directors! Long after many of today's "hot" stars have entered the realm of anachronism, Barbara Steele's work will continue to be viewed, appreciated, and coveted by film enthusiasts.

Timothy M. Walters  
Muskogee, OK

## WHY, INDEED?

I'm not the kind of person who usually buys magazines like *Imagi-Movies*, but I thought "Haunt Couture" was great. Lucky thing I heard about it from a friend, though, because you would never know about it from seeing the cover. Why would you do something so beautiful and then make a secret out of it?

Elizabeth Gagne  
Monrovia, CA

[One always fights inertia when attempting to veer off an established course. Perhaps positive response like yours and the following letter will help push us in the right direction.]

Kudos for your finest issue yet. I was most impressed with the latest edition of your fledgling magazine, which is by far the best genre magazine on the market. I particularly enjoyed your "Haunt Couture" feature, which was original, inventive, and (dare I say?) arousing. It was far superior to the obvious T&A of your breast-baring sister mag, *Femme Fatales*. My only regret is that you didn't use more full-page photos like in *GQ* or *Details*. It was

hard to discern the fine details of Ms. Temming's work in the smaller photos you used. I hope we will be seeing more features of this ilk. All in all, a diverse package that reminded me of the glory days of *CFQ*. Keep up the fine work.

John Palmer  
Omaha, NE

## MORE COUNTERPOINT

I'm thrilled to see genre subtexts being intelligently discussed again. In the heyday of the fanzine (early *CFQ*, *Photon*, etc.), this kind of article helped argue the case for respectability for the fantastic genres. Once we earned that respect, it seemed that everything became either the slavish "fan" pieces of *Fangoria/Starlog* or the in-depth reportage of the new *CFQ*. I don't intend any great insult to either format—both have their place—but I really miss those analytical pieces.

I'll toss in my own two cents on the topic. Anthony Montesano seems to be ignoring the central point of many of the "pro-abortion" films he lists, in order to use bits and pieces of them to support his argument. The IT'S ALIVE series in particular ends on an anti-abortion note in each film. These mutant children need love and understanding, not death (whether pre- or post-birth). The third film in particular supports their right to life and their value to the world, no matter what their appearance. In short, the view is that even a fetus promising deformity, severe retardation, or just plain monstrosity has a place and a value in this world. Even most anti-abortionists should be able to embrace that message.

John Thonen  
Raytown, MO

## ERRATA

Contrary to our review (*IM* 1:1:54), Meg Tilly does not appear nude in *BODY SNATCHERS*; the credits list a body double, identified only as "Jennifer" (her sister, perhaps?). The editorial for *IM* 1:2 erroneously credited author-critic William K. Everson's CLASSICS OF THE HORROR FILM with originating the the oxymoron "a B-film with a budget," to describe *THE EXORCIST*. Unable to track down the true source of this phrase, I would like to throw it open to the group mind. Can anyone recall who used these words—or words to this effect—to describe *THE EXORCIST*?

## KARYN MALCHUS

continued from page 51

"I'd really like to play sweet and innocent after playing all these weird things. I considered it paying my dues: it's better than not working, and it's a way to meet people. Now that I'm getting publicity for this, after awhile people will remember my name, but they won't remember why. I'm hoping that will help make the transition." □

## WOLF MAKEUP

continued from page 23

The system they helped develop, they say, has since become an industry standard.

ADI realized from the outset that their work would not be the driving force in this film, as it might have been in *DEATH BECOMES HER*. "This was more of a character piece than an effects film," says Gillis. "For much of the movie you're not even sure Jack's becoming a werewolf; you're assuming maybe it's in his mind. It's interesting that, as the story picks up, and starts affecting him in a very basic way, it's like watching a normal man come to grips with a condition—you get more of an internal piece. We were stepping back and accommodating the director, giving him what he needed in a very subtle way." □

## AEON FLUX

continued from page 47

third season of *LIQUID TELEVISION*, Chung reveals that he intends to showcase a new set of central protagonists and that his femme killer will finally speak. He also plans to fill viewers in on much-needed details of Aeon's world, including the rivalry between the Monica and Gregna, the respective countries of Aeon and the metaphysician-technocrat Trevor. The animator promises that, if anything, the third season will be even more challenging and psychologically dense than the previous two.

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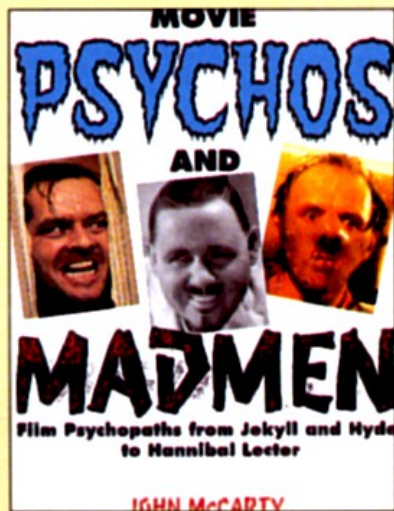
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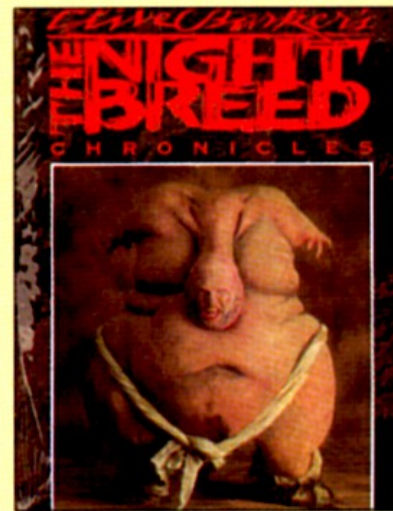
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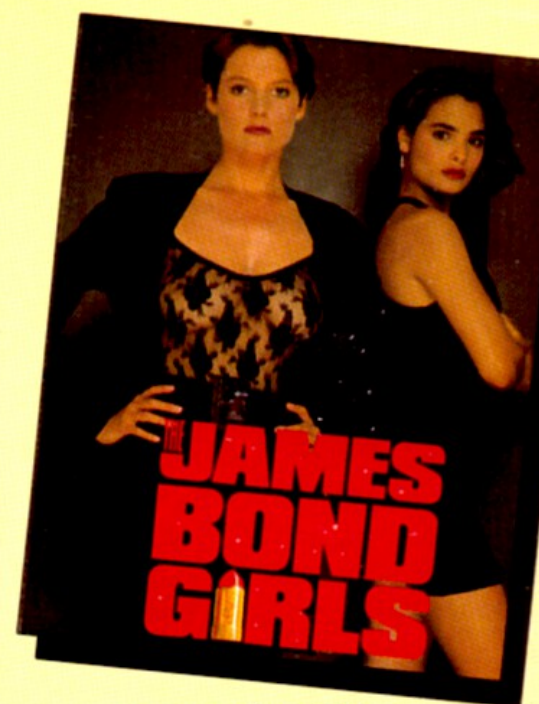
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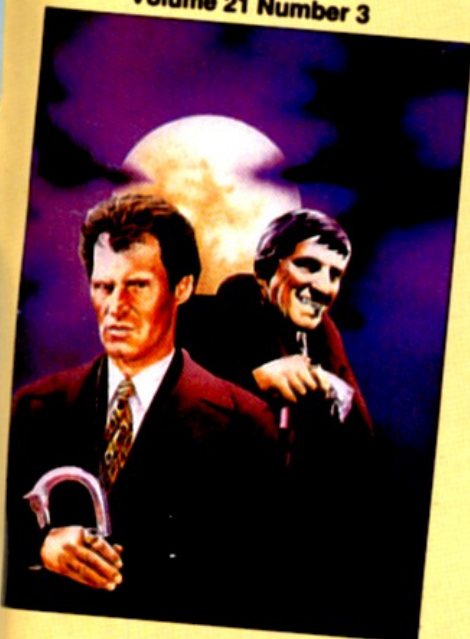
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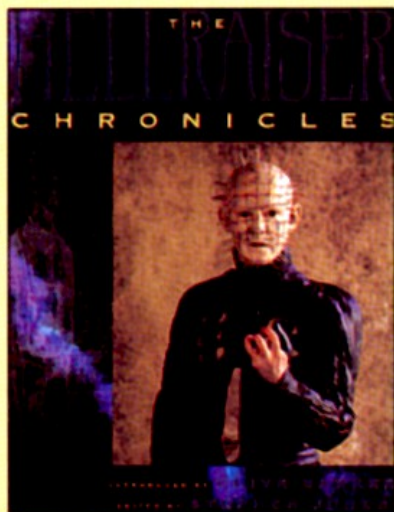
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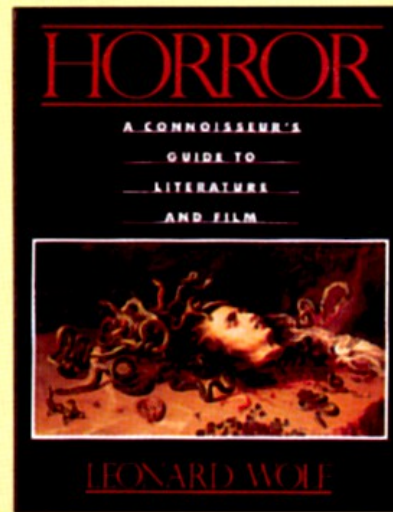


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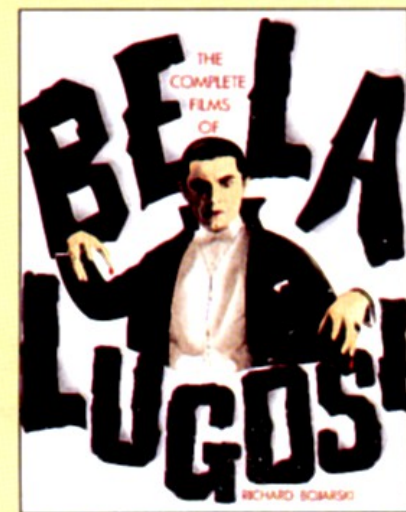
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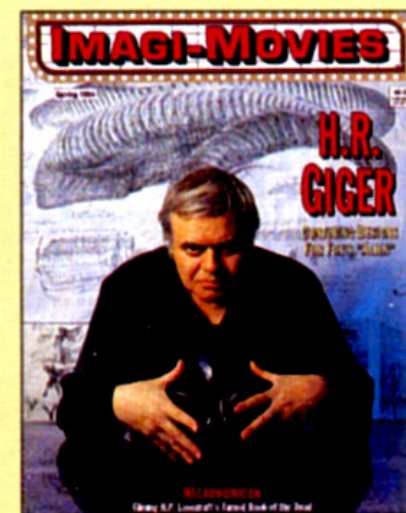
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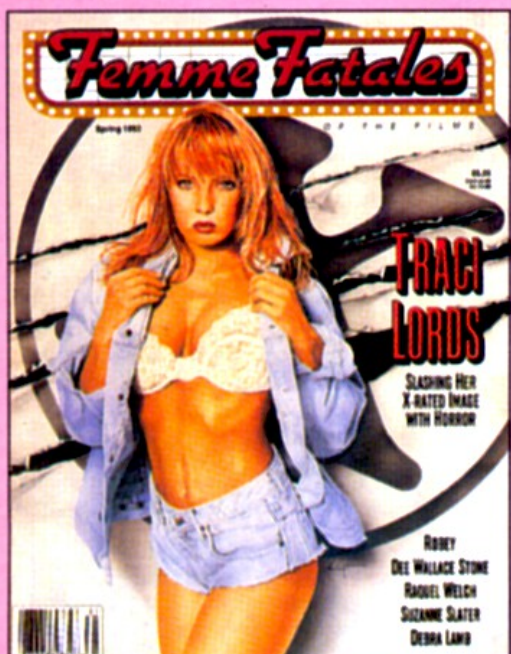
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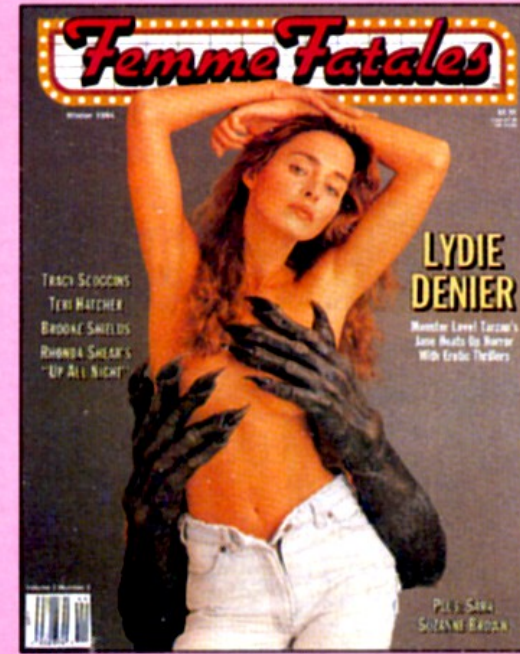
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